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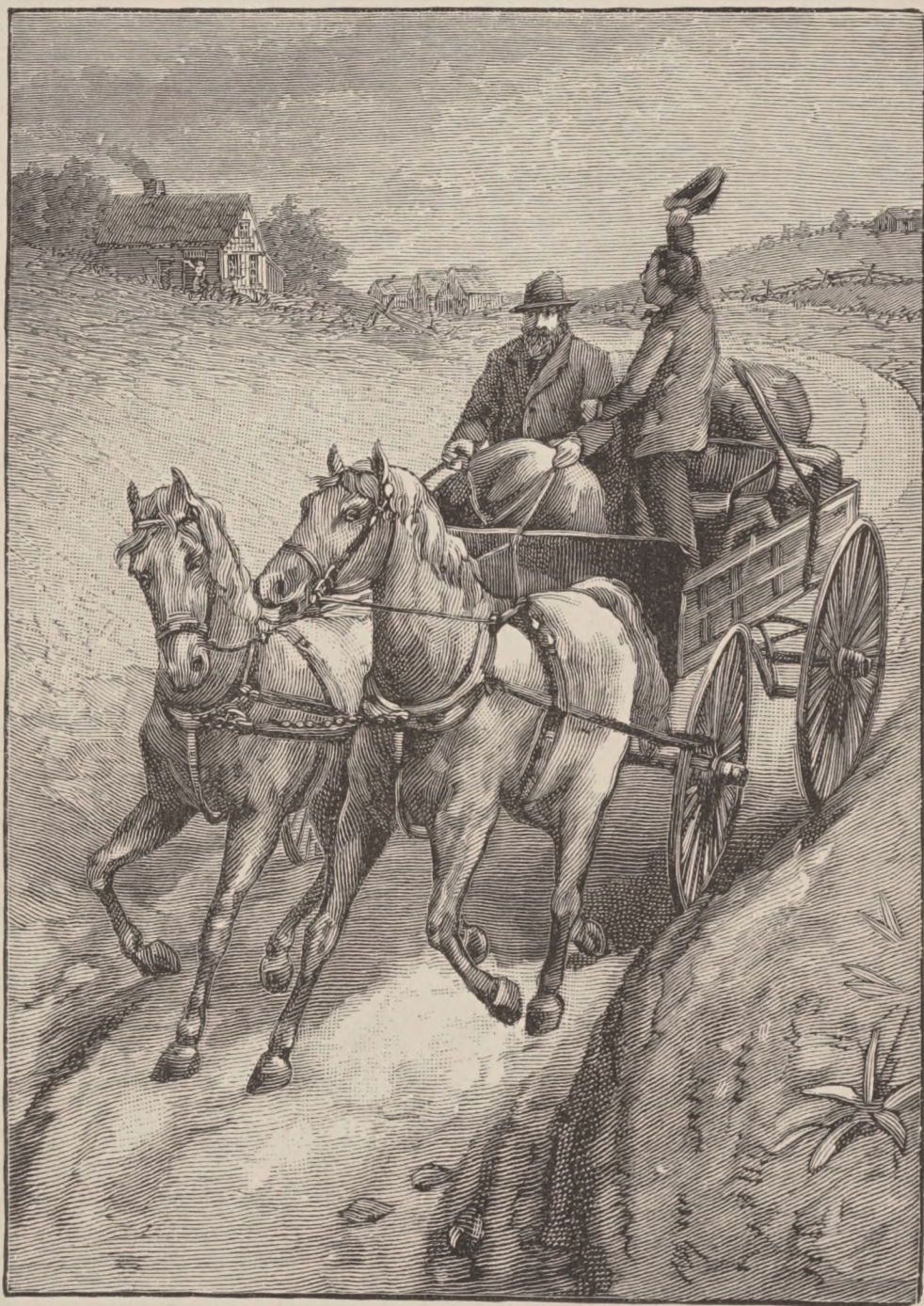
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The Chore Boy of Camp Kippewa.

THE CHORE BOY OF CAMP KIPPEWA.

BY

J. MACDONALD OXLEY.



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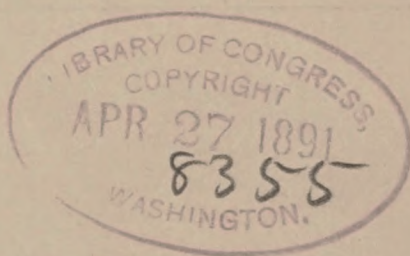
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THE

CHORE-BOY OF CAMP KIPPEWA.

BY

J. MACDONALD OXLEY.



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THE CHORE-BOY OF CAMP KIPPEWA.

CHAPTER I.

THE CALL TO WORK.

THE march of civilization on this great continent means loss as well as gain. The opening up of the country for settlement, the increase and spread of population, the making of the wilderness to blossom as the rose, compel the gradual retreat and disappearance of interesting features that can never be replaced. The buffalo, the beaver, and the elk have gone ; the bear, the Indian, and the forest in which they are both most at home are fast following.

Along the northern border of settlement in Canada there are flourishing villages and thriving hamlets to-day where but a few years ago the verdurous billows of the primeval forest rolled in unbroken grandeur. The history of any one of these villages is the history of all. An open space beside the bank of a stream or margin of a lake presented itself to the keen eye of the woodranger

traversing the trackless waste of forest as a fine site for a lumber camp. In course of time the lumber camp grew into a depot from which other camps, set still further back in the depths of the "limits," are supplied. Then the depot develops into a settlement surrounded by farms; the settlement gathers itself into a village with shops, schools, churches, and hotels, and so the process of growth goes on, the forest ever retreating as the dwellings of men multiply.

It was in a village with just such a history, and bearing the name of Calumet, occupying a commanding situation on a vigorous tributary of the Ottawa River,—the Grand River, as the dwellers beside its banks are fond of calling it,—that Frank Kingston first made the discovery of his own existence and of the world around him. He at once proceeded to make himself master of the situation, and so long as he confined his efforts to the limits of his own home he met with an encouraging degree of success; for he was an only child, and, his father's occupation requiring him to be away from home a large part of the year, his mother could hardly be severely blamed if she permitted her boy to have a good deal of his own way.

In the result, however, he was not spoiled. He came of sturdy, sensible stock, and had inherited some of the

best qualities from both sides of the house. To his mother, he owed his fair curly hair, his deep blue, honest eyes, his impulsive and tender heart; to his father, his strong symmetrical figure, his quick brain, and his eager ambition. He was a good-looking, if not strikingly handsome, boy, and carried himself in an alert, active way, that made a good impression on one at the start. He had a quick temper that would flash out hotly if he were provoked, and at such times he would do and say things for which he was heartily sorry afterward. But from those hateful qualities that we call malice, rancor, and sullenness he was absolutely free. To "have it out" and then shake hands and forget all about it—that was his way of dealing with a disagreement. Boys built on these lines are always popular among their comrades, and Frank was no exception. In fact, if one of those amicable contests as to the most popular personage, now so much in vogue at fairs and bazaars, were to have been held in Calumet school the probabilities were all in favor of Frank coming out at the head of the poll.

But better, because more enduring, than all these good qualities of body, head, and heart that formed Frank's sole fortune in the world, was the thorough religious training upon which they were based. His mother had left a Christian household to help her husband found a

new home in the great Canadian timberland, and this new home had ever been a sweet, serene center of light and love. While Calumet was little more than a straggling collection of unlovely frame cottages, and too small to have a church and pastor of its own, the hard-working Christian minister who managed to make his way thither once a month or so, to hold service in the little schoolroom, was always sure of the heartiest kind of a welcome, and the daintiest dinner possible in that out-of-the way place, at Mrs. Kingston's cozy cottage; and thus Frank had been brought into friendly relations with the "men in black" from the start, with the good result of causing him to love and respect these zealous home missionaries instead of shrinking from them in vague repugnance, as did many of his companions who had not his opportunities.

When he grew old enough to be trusted, it was his proud privilege to take the minister's tired horse to water and to fill the rack with sweet hay for his refreshment before they all went off to the service together; and very frequently when the minister was leaving he would take Frank up beside him for a drive as far as the cross-roads, not losing the chance to say a kindly and encouraging word or two that might help the little fellow heavenward.

In due time the settlement so prospered and expanded that a little church was established there, and great was the delight of Mrs. Kingston when Calumet had its minister, to whom she continued to be a most effective helper. This love for the church and its workers, which was more manifest in her than in her husband,—for, although he thought and felt alike with her, he was a reserved, undemonstrative man,—Mrs. Kingston sought by every wise means to instill into her only son; and she had much success. Religion had no terrors for him. He had never thought of it as a gloomy, joy-dispelling influence that would make him a long-faced “softy.” Not a bit of it. His father was religious; and who was stronger, braver, or more manly than his father? His mother was a pious woman; and who could laugh more cheerily or romp more merrily than his mother? The ministers who came to the house were men of God, and yet they were full of life and spirits, and dinner never seemed more delightful than when they sat at the table. No, indeed! You would have had a hard job to persuade Frank Kingston that you lost anything by being religious. He knew far better than that; and while of course he was too thorough a boy, with all a boy’s hasty, hearty, impulsive ways, to do every thing “decently and in order,” and would kick over the traces, so to speak,

sometimes, and give rather startling exhibitions of temper, still in the main and at heart he was a sturdy little Christian, who, when the storm was over, felt more sorry and remembered it longer than did anybody else.

Out of the way as Calumet might seem to city folk, yet the boys of the place managed to have a very good time. There were nearly a hundred of them, ranging in age from seven years to seventeen, attending the school which stood in the center of a big lot at the western end of the village, and with swimming, boating, lacrosse, and baseball in summer, and skating, snow-shoeing, and tobogganing in winter, they never lacked for fun. Frank was expert in all these sports. Some of the boys might excel him at one or another of them, but not one of his companions could beat him in all-round contest. This was due in part to the strength and symmetry of his frame, and in part to that spirit of thoroughness which characterized all he undertook. There was nothing half-way about him. He put his whole soul into everything that interested him, and, so far as play was concerned, at fifteen years of age he could swim, run, handle a lacrosse, hit a base ball, skim over the ice on skates, or over snow on snow shoes with a dexterity that gave himself a vast amount of pleasure and his parents a good deal of pride in him.

Nor was he behindhand as regarded the training of his mind. Mr. Warren, the head teacher of the Calumet school, regarded him favorably as one of his best and brightest pupils, and it was not often that the "roll of honor" failed to contain the name of Frank Kingston. At the midsummer closing of the school it was Mr. Warren's practice to award a number of simple prizes to the pupils whose record throughout the half-year had been highest in the different subjects, and year after year Frank had won a goodly share of these trophies, which were always books, so that now there was a shelf in his room upon which stood in attractive array Livingstone's "Travels," Ballantyne's "Hudson's Bay," Kingsley's "Westward Ho!" side by side with "Robinson Crusoe," "Pilgrim's Progress," and "Tom Brown at Rugby." Frank knew these books almost by heart, yet never wearied of turning to them again and again. He drew inspiration from them. They helped to mold his character, although of this he was hardly conscious, and they filled his soul with a longing for adventure and enterprise that no ordinary every-day career could satisfy. He looked forward eagerly to the time when he would take a man's part in life and attempt and achieve notable deeds. With Amyas Leigh he traversed the tropical wilderness of Southern America, or with the

"Young Fur Traders" the hard-frozen wastes of the boundless North, and he burned to emulate their brave doings. He little knew, as he indulged in these boyish imaginations, that the time was not far off when the call would come to him to begin life in dead earnest on his own account, and with as many obstacles to be overcome in his way as had any of his favorite heroes in theirs.

Mr. Kingston was at home only during the summer season. The long cold winter months were spent by him at the "depot," many miles off in the heart of the forest, or at the "shanties," that were connected with it. At rare intervals during the winter he might manage to get home for a Sunday, but that was all his wife and son saw of him until in spring time. When the "drive" of the logs that represented the winter's work was over, he returned to them to remain until the falling of the leaves recalled him to the forest. Frank loved and admired his father to the utmost of his ability, and when in his coolest, calmest moods he realized that there was small possibility of his ever sailing the Spanish main like Amyas Leigh, or exploring the interior of Africa like Livingstone, he felt quite settled in his own mind that, following in his father's footsteps, he would adopt lumbering as his business. 'Tis true, his father was only an

agent or foreman, and might never be anything more; but even that was not to be despised, and then with a little extra good fortune, he might in time become an owner of "limits" and mills himself. Why not? Many another boy had thus risen into wealth and importance. He had at least the right to try.

Fifteen in October, and in the highest classes, this was to be Frank's last winter at school; and before leaving for the woods his father had enjoined upon him to make the best of it, as after the summer holidays were over he would have to "cease learning and begin earning." Frank was rather glad to hear this. He was beginning to think he had grown too big for school and ought to be doing something more directly remunerative. Poor boy! Could he have guessed that those were the last words he would hear from his dear father's lips, how differently would they have affected him! Calumet never saw Mr. Kingston again. In returning alone to the depot from a distant shanty, he was caught in a fierce and sudden snow storm. The little-traveled road through the forest was soon obliterated. Blinded and bewildered by the pitiless storm beating in their faces, both man and beast lost their way, and, wandering about until all strength was spent, lay down to die in the drifts that quickly hid their bodies from sight. It was many days

before they were found, lying together, close wrapped in their winding-sheet of snow.

Mrs. Kingston bore the dreadful trial with the fortitude and submissive grace that only a serene and un murmuring faith can give. Frank was more demonstrative in his grief, and disposed to rebel against so cruel a calamity. But his mother calmed and inspired him, and when the first numbing force of the blow had passed away, they took counsel together as to the future. This was dark and uncertain enough. All that was left to them was the little cottage in which they lived. Mr. Kingston's salary had not been large, and only by careful management had the house been secured. Of kind and sympathizing friends there was no lack; but they were mostly people in moderate circumstances, like themselves, from whom nothing more than sympathy could be expected.

"I'm afraid there'll be no more school for you now, Frank darling," said his mother, passing her white hand fondly over his forehead as he sat beside the lounge upon which she was reclining. "Will you mind having to go to work?"

"Mind it!" exclaimed Frank. "Not a bit of it! I'm old enough, ain't I?"

"I suppose you are, dear," replied Mrs. Kingston,

half-sadly. "What kind of work should you like best?"

"That's not a hard question to answer mother," returned Frank, promptly. "I want to be what father was."

Mrs. Kingston's face grew pale when she heard Frank's answer, and for some time she made no reply.

CHAPTER II.

THE CHOICE OF AN OCCUPATION.

THE fact was that Mrs. Kingston felt a strong repugnance to her son's following in his father's footsteps, so far as his occupation was concerned. She dreaded the danger that was inseparable from it, and shrank from the idea of giving up the boy whose company was now the chief delight of her life, for all the long winter months that would be so dreary without him.

Frank had some inkling of his mother's feelings, but, boy like, thought of them as only the natural nervousness of womankind; and, his heart being set upon going to the woods, he was not very open to argument.

"Why don't you want me to go lumbering, mother?" he inquired in a tone that had a touch of petulance in it. "I've got to do something for myself, and I detest store-keeping. It's not in my line at all. Fellows like Tom Clemon and Jack Stoner may find it suits them, but I can't bear the idea of being shut up in a store or office all day. I want to be out of doors. That's the kind of life for me."

Mrs. Kingston gave a sigh that was a presage of

defeat as she regarded her son, standing before her, his handsome face flushed with eagerness and his eyes flashing with determination.

"But, Frank dear," said she, gently, "have you thought how dreadfully lonely it will be for me living all alone here during the long winter—your father gone from me and you away off in the woods, where I can never get to you or you to me?"

The flush on Frank's face deepened and extended until it covered forehead and neck with its crimson glow. He had not taken this view of the case into consideration before, and his tender heart reproached him for so forgetting his mother while laying out his own plans. He sprang forward, and, kneeling down beside the lounge, threw his arms about his mother's neck and clasped her fondly, finding it hard to keep the tears back, as he said:

"You dear, darling mother! I have been selfish. I should have thought how lonely it would be for you in the winter time."

Mrs. Kingston returned the embrace with no less fervor, and as usually happens where the other side seems to be giving way, began to weaken somewhat herself and to feel a little doubtful as to whether, after all, it would be right to oppose her son's wishes when

his inclinations toward the occupation he had chosen were evidently so very decided.

“Well, Frank dear,” she said, after a pause, while Frank looked at her expectantly, “I don’t want to be selfish, either. If it were not for the way we lost your father, perhaps I should not have such a dread of the woods for you, and no doubt even then it is foolish for me to give way to it. We won’t decide the matter now. If you do go to the woods, it won’t be until the autumn, and perhaps during the summer something will turn up that will please us better. We will leave the matter in God’s hands. He will bring it to pass in the way that will be best for us both, I am confident.”

So with that understanding the matter rested, although of course it was continually being referred to as the weeks slipped by and the summer waxed and waned. Although Frank felt quite convinced in his own mind that he was not cut out for a position behind a desk or counter, he determined to make the experiment, and accordingly applied to Squire Eagleson, who kept the principal store and was the “big man” of the village, for a place in his establishment. Summer being the squire’s busy season, and Frank being well known to him, he was glad enough to add to his small staff of clerks so promising a recruit, especially as, taking

advantage of the boy's ignorance of business affairs, he was able to engage him at wages much below his actual worth to him. This the worthy squire regarded as quite a fine stroke of business, and told it to his wife with great gusto, rubbing his fat hands complacently together as he chuckled over his shrewdness.

"Bright boy, that Frank Kingston! Writes a good fist, and can run up a row of figgers like smoke. Mighty civil, too, and sharp. And all for three dollars a week! Ha, ha, ha! Wish I could make as good a bargain as that every day." And the squire looked the picture of virtuous content as he leaned back in his big chair to enjoy the situation.

Mrs. Eagleson did not often venture to intermeddle in her husband's business affairs, although frequently she became aware of things which she could not reconcile with her conscience. But this time she was moved to speak by an impulse she could not control. She knew the Kingstons, and had always thought well of them. Mrs. Kingston seemed to her in many respects a model woman, who deserved well of everybody; and that her husband, who was so well-to-do, should take any advantage of these worthy people who had so little, touched her to the quick. There was a bright spot on the center of her pale cheeks and an unaccustomed ring

in her voice as she exclaimed, with a sharpness that made her husband give quite a start of surprise :

“Do you mean to tell me, Daniel, that you’ve been mean enough to take advantage of that boy who has to support his widowed mother, and to hire him for half the wages he’s worth just because he didn’t know any better ? And then you come home here and boast of it. Have you no conscience ?”

The squire was so taken aback by this unexpected attack that at first he hardly knew how to meet it. Should he lecture his wife for her presumption in meddling in his affairs, which were quite beyond her comprehension as a woman, or should he make light of the matter and laugh it off ? After a moment’s reflection, he decided on the latter course.

“Hoity, toity ! Mrs. Eagleson, but what’s set you so suddenly on fire ? Business is business, you know, and if Frank Kingston did not know enough to ask for more wages it wasn’t my concern to enlighten him.”

Mrs. Eagleson rose from her chair and came over and stood in front of her husband, pointing her long thin forefinger at him as, with a trembling yet scornful voice, she addressed him thus :

“Daniel, how you can kneel down and ask the blessing of God upon such doings is beyond me, or how your

head can lie easy on your pillow when you know that you are taking the bread out of that poor lone widow's mouth it is not for me to say. But this I will say, whether you like it or not: if you are not ashamed of yourself I am for you." And before the now much-disturbed squire had time to say another word in his defense, the speaker had swept indignantly out of his presence and hastened to her own room, there to throw herself down upon the bed and burst into a passion of tears, for she was at best but a weak-nerved woman.

Left to himself, the squire shifted about uneasily in his chair, and then rose and stumped angrily to the window.

"What does she know about business?" he muttered. "If she were to have her own way at the store she'd ruin me in a twelve-month."

Yet Mrs. Eagleson's brave outburst was not in vain. Somehow or other after it the squire never felt comfortable in his mind until, much to Frank's surprise and delight, he one day called him to him, and, with an air of great generosity and patronage, said:

"See here, my lad. You seem to be doing your work real well, so I am going to give you a dollar a week more just to encourage you, and then if a little extra work comes along"—for autumn was approaching—"ye won't mind tackling it with a good will; eh?"

Frank thanked his employer very heartily, and this unexpected increase of earnings and his mother's joy over it for a time almost reconciled him to the work at the store, which he liked less and less the longer he was at it.

The fact of the matter was a place behind the counter was uncongenial to him in many ways. There was too much in-doors about it, to begin with. From early morning until late evening he had to be at his post, with brief intervals for meals, and the color was leaving his cheeks and his muscles were growing slack and soft, owing to the constant confinement.

But this was the least of his troubles. A still more serious matter was that his conscience did not suffer him to take kindly to the "tricks of the trade," in which his employer was a "passed master" and his fellow-clerks very promising pupils. He could not find it in his heart to depreciate the quality of Widow Perkins's butter, or to cajole unwary Sam Struthers, from the backlands, into taking a shop-worn remnant for the new dress his wife had so carefully commissioned him to buy. His idea of trade was that you should deal with others as fairly as you would have them deal with you; and while, of course, according to the squire's philosophy, you could never make a full purse that way, still you could at least

have a clear conscience, which surely was the more desirable, after all.

The squire had noticed Frank's "pernickety nonsense," as he was pleased to call it, and at first gave him several broad hints as to the better mode of doing business; but, finding that the lad was firm, and would no doubt give up his place rather than learn these "business ways," he had the good sense to let him alone, finding in his quickness, fidelity, and attention to his work sufficient compensation for this deficiency in bargaining acumen.

"You'll be content to stay at the store now, won't you, Frank?" said his mother as they talked over the welcome and much-needed raise of salary.

"It does seem to make it easier to stay, mother," answered Frank. "But ——" And he gave a big sigh, and stopped.

"But what, dear?" asked Mrs. Kingston, tenderly.

Frank was slow in answering. He evidently felt reluctant to bring up the matter again, and yet his mind was full of it.

"But what, Frank?" repeated his mother, taking his hands in hers and looking earnestly into his face.

"Well, mother, it's no use pretending. I'm not cut out for keeping store, and I'll never be much good at it. I don't like being in doors all day. And then, if you

want to get on, you've got to do all sorts of things that are nothing else but downright mean, and I don't like that, either." And then Frank went on to tell of some of the tricks and stratagems the squire or the other clerks would resort to in order to make a good bargain.

Mrs. Kingston listened with profound attention. More than once of late, as she noticed her son's growing pallor and loss of spirits, she had asked herself whether she were not doing wrong in seeking to turn him aside from the life for which he longed; and now that he was finding fresh and fatal objections to the occupation he had chosen in deference to her wishes, she began to relent of her insistence, and to feel more disposed to discuss the question again. But before doing so she wished to ask the advice of a friend in whom she placed much confidence, and so for the present she contented herself with applauding Frank for his conscientiousness, and assuring him that she would a thousand times rather have him always poor than grow rich after the same fashion as Squire Eagleson.

The friend whose advice Mrs. Kingston wished to take was her husband's successor as foreman at the depot for the lumber camps—a sensible, steady, reliable young man, who had risen to his present position by process of promotion from the bottom, and who was therefore

well qualified to give her just the counsel she desired. At the first opportunity, therefore, she went over to Mr. Stewart's cottage, and, finding him at home, opened her heart fully to him. Mr. Stewart, or Alec Stewart, as he was generally called, listened with ready sympathy to what Mrs. Kingston had to say, and showed much interest in the matter, for he had held a high opinion of his former chief, and knew Frank well enough to admire his spirit and character.

"Well, you see, Mrs. Kingston, it's just this way," said he, when his visitor had stated the case upon which she wanted his opinion: "if Frank's got his heart so set upon going into the woods, I don't know as there's any use trying to cross him. He won't take kindly to anything else while he's thinking of that, and he'd a big sight better be a good lumberman than a poor clerk, don't you think?"

Mrs. Kingston felt the force of this reasoning, yet could hardly make up her mind to yield to it at once.

"But, Mr. Stewart," she urged, "it may only be a boyish notion of Frank's. He thinks, perhaps, he'd like it because that's what his father was before him, and then he may find his mistake."

"Well, Mrs. Kingston," replied Mr. Stewart, "if you think there's any chance of that being the case we can

settle the question right enough in this way: let Frank come to the woods with me this winter. I will give him a berth as chore-boy in one of the camps, and if that doesn't sicken him of the business then all I can say is you'd better let the lad have his will.'

Mrs. Kingston sighed.

"I suppose you're right. I don't quite like the idea of his being chore-boy; but if he's really in earnest, there's no better way of proving him."

When Frank heard that his desire for a winter in the woods was to be gratified after all, he felt too delighted to find any fault with the position, humble though it was, as he well knew, which Mr. Stewart offered him. The prospect of release from the uncongenial routine of store-keeping filled him with happiness, and his mother almost felt reconciled to let him go from her, so marked was the change in his spirits.

CHAPTER III.

OFF TO THE WOODS.

SEPTEMBER, the finest of all the months in the Canadian calendar, was at hand, as the sumac and the maple took evident delight in telling by their lovely tints of red and gold, and the hot enervating breath of summer had yielded to the inspiring coolness of early autumn. The village of Calumet fairly bubbled over with business and bustle. Preparations for the winter's work were being made on all sides. During the course of the next two weeks or so a large number of men would be leaving their homes for the lumber camps, and the chief subject of conversation in all circles was the fascinating and romantic occupation in which they were engaged.

No one was more busy than Mrs. Kingston. Even if her son was to be only a chore-boy, his equipment should be as comfortable and complete as though he were going to be a foreman. She knew very well that Jack Frost has no compunctions about sending the thermometer away down, thirty or forty degrees below zero, in those

far-away forest depths, and whatever other hardships Frank might be called upon to endure, it was very well settled in her mind that he should not suffer for lack of warm clothing. Accordingly, the knitting-needles and sewing-needles had been plied industriously from the day his going into the woods was decided upon, and now that the time for departure drew near, the result was to be seen in a chest filled with such thick warm stockings, shirts, mittens, and comforters, besides a good outfit of other clothing, that Frank, looking them over with a keen appreciation of their merits and of the loving skill they evidenced, turned to his mother, saying, with a grateful smile.

“Why, mother, you’ve fitted me out as though I were going to the North Pole.”

“You’ll need them all, my dear, before the winter’s over,” said Mrs. Kingston, the tears rising in her eyes, as involuntarily she thought of how the cruel cold had taken from her the father of the bright, hopeful boy before her. “Your father never thought I provided too many warm things for him.”

Frank was in great spirits. He had resigned his clerkship at Squire Eagleson’s, much to that worthy merchant’s regret. The squire looked upon him as a very foolish fellow to give up a position in his store, where he had

such good opportunities of learning business ways, in order to go "galivanting off to the woods," where his good writing and correct figuring would be of no account.

Frank said nothing about his decided objections to the squire's ideas of business ways and methods, but contented himself with stating respectfully his strong preference for out-door life, and his intention to make lumbering his occupation, as it had been his father's before him.

"Well, well, my lad," said the squire, when he saw there was no moving him, "have your own way. I reckon you'll be glad enough to come back to me in the spring. One winter in the camps will be all you'll want."

Frank left the squire, saying to himself as he went out from the store :

"If I do get sick of the camp and want a situation in the spring, this is not the place I'll come to for it; you can depend upon that, Squire Eagleson; many thanks to you, all the same."

Mr. Stewart was going up to the depot, the first week in September, to get matters in readiness for the men who would follow him a week later, and much to Frank's satisfaction he announced that he would take him along if he could be ready in time. Thanks to Mrs. Kingston's being of the fore-handed kind, nothing was lacking in her son's

preparations, and the day of departure was anticipated with great eagerness by him, and with much sinking of heart by her.

The evening previous mother and son had a long talk together, in the course of which she impressed upon him the absolute importance of his making no disguise of his religious principles.

“ You’ll be the youngest in the camp, perhaps, Frank darling, and it will, no doubt, be very hard for you to read your Bible and say your prayers, as you’ve always done here at home. But the braver you are about it at first, the easier it’ll be in the end. Take your stand at the very start. Let the shanty men see that you’re not afraid to confess yourself a Christian, and rough and wicked as they may be, never fear but they’ll respect you for it.”

Mrs. Kingston spoke with an earnestness and emphasis that went straight to Frank’s heart. He had perfect faith in his mother. In his eyes she was without fault or failing, and he knew very well that she was asking nothing of him that she was not altogether ready to do herself, were she to be put in his place. Not only so. His own shrewd sense confirmed the wisdom of her words. There could be no half-way position for him at the lumber camp ; no half-hearted serving of God would be of any

use there. He must take Caleb for his pattern, and follow the Lord wholly. His voice was low, but full of quiet determination, as he answered :

“I know it, mother. It won’t be easy, but I’m not afraid. I’ll begin fair and let the others know just where I stand, and they may say or do what they like.”

Mrs. Kingston needed no further assurance to make her mind quite easy upon this point, and she took no small comfort from the thought that, faithful and consistent as she felt so confident Frank would be, despite the many trials and temptations inseparable from his new sphere of life, he could hardly fail to exercise some good influence upon those about him, and perhaps prove a very decided power for good among the rough men of the lumber camp.

The day of departure dawned clear and bright ; the air was cool and bracing, the ground glistened with the heavy autumn dew that the sun had not yet had time to drink up, and the village was not fairly astir for the day when Mr. Stewart drove up to Mrs. Kingston’s door for his young passenger. He was not kept long waiting, for Frank had been ready fully half an hour beforehand, and all that remained to be done was to bid his mother “good-bye,” until he should return with the spring floods. Overflowing with joy as he was at the realization of his

desire, yet he was too fond a son not to feel keenly the parting with his mother, and he bustled about very vigorously, stowing away his things in the back of the wagon, as the best way of keeping himself under control.

He had a good deal of luggage for a boy. First of all, there was his chest packed tight with warm clothing, then another box heavy with cake, preserves, pickles, and other home-made dainties, wherewith to vary the monotony of shanty fare; then a big bundle containing a wool mattress, a pillow, two pairs of heavy blankets, and a thick comforter, to insure his sleep being undisturbed by saucy Jack Frost; and finally, a narrow box made by his own father to carry the light rifle that always accompanied him, together with a plentiful supply of ammunition. In this box Frank was particularly interested, for he had learned to handle this rifle pretty well during the summer, and looked forward to accomplishing great things with it when he got into the woods.

Mr. Stewart laughed when he saw all that Frank was taking with him.

"I guess you'll be the swell of the camp, and make all the other fellows wish they had a mother to fit them out. It's a fortunate thing my wagon's roomy, or we'd have to leave some of your stuff to come up by one of the teams," said he.

Mrs. Kingston was about to make apologies for the size of Frank's outfit, but Mr. Stewart stopped her.

"It's all right, Mrs. Kingston. The lad might just as well be comfortable as not. He'll have plenty of roughing it, anyway. And now we've got it all on board, we must be starting."

The moment Mrs. Kingston dreaded had now come. Throwing her arms around Frank's neck, she clasped him passionately to her heart, again and again, and then, tearing herself away from him, rushed up the steps, as if she dared not trust herself any longer. Gulping down the big lump that rose into his throat, Frank sprang up beside Mr. Stewart, and the next moment they were off. But before they turned the corner, Frank, looking back, caught sight of his mother standing in the doorway, and taking off his cap, he gave her a farewell salute, calling out rather huskily his last "good-bye," as the swiftly-moving wagon bore him away.

Mr. Stewart took much pride in his turnout, and with good reason; for there was not a finer pair of horses in Calumet than those that were now trotting along before him, as if the well-filled wagon to which they were attached was no impediment whatever. His work required him to be much upon the road in all seasons, and he considered it well worth his while to make the business of driving

about as pleasant as possible. The horses were iron-greys, beautifully matched in size, shape, and speed ; the harness sparkled with bright brass mountings, and the wagon, a kind of express, with specially strong springs and comfortable seat, had abundant room for passengers and luggage.

As they rattled along the village street there were many shouts of "Good-bye, Frank," and "Good luck to you," from shop and sidewalk ; for everybody knew Frank's destination, and there were none that did not wish him well, whatever might be their opinion of the wisdom of his action. In responding to these expressions of good-will, Frank found timely relief for the feelings stirred by the parting with his mother, and before the impatient greys had breasted the hill, which began where the village ended, he had quite regained his customary good spirits and was ready to reply brightly enough to Mr. Stewart's remarks.

"Well, Frank, you've put your hand to the plow now, as the Scripture says, and you mustn't turn back on any account, or all the village will be laughing at you," he said, scanning his companion closely.

"Not much fear of that, Mr. Stewart," answered Frank, firmly. "Calumet won't see me again until next spring. Whether I like the lumbering or not, I'm going to stick out the winter, anyway ; you see if I don't."

"I haven't much fear of you, my boy," returned Mr. Stewart, "even if you do find shanty life a good deal rougher than you may have imagined. You'll have to fight your own way, you know. I shan't be around much, and the other men will all be strangers at first, but just you do what you know and feel to be right, without minding the others, and they won't bother you long, but will respect you for having a conscience and the pluck to obey it. As for your work, it'll seem pretty heavy and hard at the start, but you've got lots of grit, and it won't take you long to get used to it."

Frank listened attentively to Mr. Stewart's kindly, sensible advice, and had many questions to ask him as the speedy horses bore them farther and farther away from Calumet. The farms, which at first, had followed one another in close succession grew more widely apart, and finally ended altogether before many miles of the dusty road had been covered, and thenceforward their way ran through unbroken woods, not the stately "forest primeval" but the scrubby "second growth," from which those who have never been into the heart of the leafy wilderness can form but a poor conception of the grandeur to which trees can attain.

About midday they halted at a lonely log house which served as a sort of inn, or resting place, the proprietor

finding compensation for the dreariness of his situation in the large profit derived from an illegal, but thriving traffic in liquor. A more unkempt, unattractive establishment could hardly be imagined, and if rumor was to be relied upon, it had good reason to be haunted by more than one untimely ghost.

"A wretched den!" said Mr. Stewart, as he drew up before the door. "I wouldn't think of stopping here for a moment but for the horses. But we may as well go in and see if old Pierre can get us a decent bite to eat."

The horses having been attended to, they entered the house, where they found Pierre, the proprietor, dozing on his bar, a bloated, blear-eyed creature, who evidently would have much preferred making them drunk with his vile whiskey to preparing them any pretense for a dinner. But they firmly declined his liquor, so muttering unintelligibly to himself, he shambled off to obey their behests. After some delay they succeeded in getting a miserable meal of some kind, and then, the horses being sufficiently rested, they set off once more at a good pace, not halting again until, just before sundown, they arrived at the depot, where the first stage of their journey ended.

This depot was simply a large farm set in the midst of a wilderness of trees, and forming a center from which some half dozen shanties, or lumber camps, placed at

different distances in the depths of the forest that stretched away interminably north, south, east, and west, were supplied with all that was necessary for their maintenance. Besides the ordinary farm buildings, there was another which served as a sort of a shop, or warehouse, being filled with a stock of axes, saws, blankets, boots, beef, pork, tea, sugar, molasses, flour, and so forth, for the use of the lumbermen. This was Mr. Stewart's headquarters, and as the tired horses drew up before the door he tossed the reins over their backs, saying:

"Here we are, Frank. You'll stay here until your gang is made up. To-morrow morning I'll introduce you to some of your mates."

CHAPTER IV.

THE BUILDING OF THE SHANTY.

FRANK looked about him with quick curiosity, expecting to see some of the men in whose society he was to spend the winter. But there were only the farmhands lounging listlessly about, their day's work being over, and they had nothing to do except to smoke their pipes and wait for nightfall, when they would lounge off to bed.

The shantymen had not yet arrived, Mr. Stewart always making a point of being at the depot some days in advance of them, in order to have plenty of time to prepare his plans for the winter campaign. Noting Frank's inquiring look, he laughed, and said:

"Oh, there are none of them here yet. We're the first on the field, but by the end of the week there'll be more than a hundred men here."

A day or two later the first batch made their appearance, coming up by the heavy teams that they would take with them into the woods, and each day brought a fresh contingent, until by the time Mr. Stewart had mentioned the farm fairly swarmed with them, and it became

necessary for this human hive to imitate the bees and send off its superfluous inhabitants without delay.

They were a rough, noisy, strange-looking lot of men, and Frank, whose acquaintance with the shantymen had been limited to seeing them in small groups as they passed through Calumet in the autumn and spring, on their way to and from the camps, meeting them now for the first time in such large numbers could not help some inward shrinking of soul, as he noted their uncouth ways and listened to their oath-besprinkled talk. They were "all sorts and conditions of men"—habitants who could not speak a word of English, and Irishmen who could not speak a word of French; shrewd Scotchmen, chary of tongue and reserved of manner, and loquacious half-breeds ready for song, or story, or fight, according to the humor of the moment. Here and there were dusky skins and prominent features that betrayed a close connection with the aboriginal owners of this continent. Almost all had come from the big saw-mills away down the river, or from some other equally arduous employment, and were glad of the chance of a few days' respite from work while Mr. Stewart was dividing them up and making the necessary arrangements for the winter's work.

Frank mingled freely with them, scraping acquaintance with those who seemed disposed to be friendly, and

whenever he came across one with an honest, pleasant, prepossessing face, hoping very much that he would be a member of his gang. He was much impressed by the fact that he was evidently the youngest member of the gathering, and did not fail to notice the sometimes curious, sometimes contemptuous looks with which he was regarded by the fresh arrivals.

In the course of a few days matters were pretty well straightened out at the depot, and the gangs of men began to leave for the different camps. Mr. Stewart had promised Frank that he would take care to put him under a foreman who would treat him well, and when one evening he was called into the office and introduced to a tall, powerful, grave-looking man, with heavy brown beard and deep voice, Mr. Stewart said:

“Here is Frank Kingston, Dan; Jack’s only son, you know. He’s set his heart on lumbering, and I’m going to let him try it for a winter.”

Frank scrutinized the man called Dan very closely as Mr. Stewart continued:

“I’m going to send him up to the Kippewa camp with you, Dan. There’s nobody ’ll look after him better than you will, for I know you thought a big sight of his father, and for his sake, as well as mine, you’ll see that nothing happens to the lad.”

Dan Johnston's face relaxed into a smile that showed there were rich depths of good nature beneath his rather stern exterior, for he was pleased at the compliment implied in the superintendent's words, and, stretching out a mighty hand to Frank, he laid it on his shoulder in a kindly way, saying :

"He seems a likely lad, Mr. Stewart, and a chip off the old block, if I'm not mistaken. I'll be right glad to have him with me. But what kind of work is he to go at. He seems rather light for chopping, doesn't he?"

Mr. Stewart gave a quizzical sort of glance at Frank, as he replied :

"Well, you see, Dan, I think, myself, he is too light for chopping, so I told him he'd have to be chore-boy for this winter, anyway."

A look of surprise came over Johnston's face, and more to himself than the others he muttered, in a low tone :

"Chore-boy, eh? Jack Kingston's son a chore-boy!" Then, turning to Frank, he said aloud : "All right, my boy. There's nothing like beginning at the bottom if you want to learn the whole business. You must make up your mind to put in a pretty hard time; but I'll see you have fair play, anyway."

As Frank looked at the rugged, honest, determined face, and the stalwart frame, he felt thoroughly satisfied

that in Dan Johnston he had a friend in whom he could place perfect confidence, and that Mr. Stewart's promise had been fully kept. The foreman then became quite sociable, and asked him many questions about his mother, and his life in Calumet, and his plans for the future, so that before they parted for the night Frank felt as if they were quite old friends instead of recent acquaintances.

The following morning Johnston was bestirring himself bright and early getting his men and stores together, and before noon a start was made for the Kippewa River, on whose southern bank a site had already been selected for the lumber camp which would be the center of his operations for the winter. Johnston's gang numbered forty men all told, himself included, and they were in high spirits as they set out for their destination. The stores and tools were, of course, transported by wagon, but the men had to go on foot, and, with fifteen miles of a rough forest road to cover before sundown, they struck a brisk pace as, in two and threes and quartettes, they marched noisily along the dusty road.

"You stay by me, Frank," said the foreman, "and if your young legs happen to go back on you, you can have a lift on one of the teams until you're rested."

Frank felt in such fine trim that, although he fully ap-

preciated his big friend's thoughtfulness, he was rash enough to think he would not require to avail himself of it; but the next five miles showed him his mistake, and at the end of them he was very glad to jump upon one of the teams that happened to be passing, and in this way hastened over a good part of the remainder of the tramp.

As the odd-looking gang pushed forward steadily, if not in exactly martial order, Frank had a good opportunity of inspecting its members and making in his own mind an estimate of their probable good or bad qualities as companions. In this he was much assisted by the foreman, who, in reply to his questions, gave him helpful bits of information about the different ones that attracted his attention. Fully one-half of the gang were French Canadians, dark-complexioned, black-haired, bright-eyed men, full of life and talk, their tongues going unceasingly as they plodded along in sociable groups. Of the remainder some were Scotch, others Irish, the rest English. Upon the whole, they were quite a promising-looking lot of men; indeed, Johnston took very good care to have as little "poor stuff" as possible in his gang; for he had long held the reputation of turning out more logs at his camp than were cut at any other on the same "limits;" and this well-deserved fame he cherished very dearly.

Darkness was coming on apace when at last a glad

shout from the foremost group announced that the end of the journey was near, and in a few minutes more the whole band of tired men were resting their wearied limbs on the bank of the river near which the shanty was to be erected at once. The teams had arrived some time before them, and two large tents had been put up as temporary shelter, while brightly-burning fires and the appetizing sizzle of frying bacon joined with the wholesome aroma of hot tea to make glad the hearts of the dusty, hungry pedestrians.

Frank enjoyed his open-air tea immensely. It was his first taste of real lumberman's life, and was undoubtedly a pleasant introduction to it; for the hard work would not begin until the morrow, and in the meantime everybody was still a-holidaying. So refreshing was the evening meal that, tired as all no doubt felt from their long tramp, they soon forgot it sufficiently to spend an hour or more in song and chorus that made the vast forest aisles re-echo with rough melody before they sank into the silence of slumber for the night.

At daybreak next morning Dan Johnston's stentorian voice aroused the sleepers, and Frank could hardly believe that he had taken more than twice forty winks at the most before the stirring shout of "Turn out! Turn out! The work's waiting!" broke into his dreams and

recalled him to life's realities. The morning was gray and chilly, the men looked sleepy and out of humor, and Johnston himself had a stern, distant manner, or seemed to have, as after a wash at the river bank Frank approached him and reported himself for duty.

"Will you please to tell me what is to be my work, Mr. Johnston?" said he, in quite a timid tone; for somehow or other there seemed to be a change in the atmosphere.

The foreman's face relaxed a little as he turned to answer him.

"You want to be set to work, eh? Well, that won't take long." And, looking around among the moving men until he found the one he wanted, he raised his voice and called:

"Hi, there, Baptiste! Come here a moment."

In response to the summons a short, stout, smooth-faced, and decidedly good-natured looking Frenchman, who had been busy at one of the fires, came over to the foreman.

"See here, Baptiste; this lad's to be your chore-boy this winter, and I don't want you to be too hard on him—*savez?* Let him have plenty of work, but not more than his share."

Baptiste examined Frank's sturdy figure with much

the same smile of approval that he might bestow upon a fine capon that he was preparing for the pot, and murmured out something like :

“*Bien, m’sieur.* I sall be easy wid him if ee’s a good boy.”

The foreman then said to Frank :

“There, Frank ; go with Baptiste, and he’ll give you work enough.”

So Frank went dutifully off with the Frenchman.

He soon found out what his work was to be. Baptiste was cook, and he was his assistant, not so much in the actual cooking, for Baptiste looked after that himself, but in the scouring of the pots and pans, the keeping up of the fires, the setting out of the food, and such other supplementary duties. Not very dignified or inspiring employment, certainly, especially for a boy “with a turn for books and figures.” But Frank had come to the camp prepared to undertake, without a murmur, any work within his powers that might be given him, and he now went quietly and steadily at what was required of him.

As soon as breakfast was dispatched, Johnston called the men together to give them directions about the building of the shanty, which was the first thing of all to be done, and having divided them up into parties, to

each of which a different task was assigned, he set them at work without delay.

Frank was very glad that attention to his duties would not prevent his watching the others at theirs; for what could be more interesting than to study every stage of the erection of the building that was to be their shelter and home during the long winter months now rapidly approaching? It was a first experience for him, and nothing escaped his vigilant eye. This is the way he described the building of the shanty to his mother on his return to Calumet:

“ You see, mother, everybody except Baptiste and myself took a hand, and just worked like beavers. I wish you could have seen the men. And Mr. Johnston—why, he was in two places at once most of the time, or at least seemed to be! It was grand fun watching them. The first thing they did was to cut down a lot of trees: splendid big fellows, that would make the trees round here look pretty small, I can tell you. Then they chopped off all the branches and cut up the trunks into the lengths that suited, and laid them one on top of the other until they made a wall about as high as Mr. Johnston, or perhaps higher, in the shape of one big room forty feet long by thirty feet wide, Mr. Johnston said. It looked very funny then, just like a huge pig-

pen, with no windows and only one door—on the side that faced the river. Next day they laid long timbers across the top of the wall, resting them in the middle on four great posts they called ‘scoop-bearers.’ Funny name, isn’t it? But they called them that because they bear the ‘scoops’ that make the roof; and a grand roof it is, I tell you. The scoops are small logs hollowed out on one side and flat on the other, and they lay them on the cross timbers in such a way that the edges of one fit into the hollows of two others, so that the rain hasn’t a chance to get in, no matter how hard it tries. Next thing they make the floor; and that wasn’t a hard job, for they just made logs flat on two sides and laid them on the ground, so that it was a pretty rough sort of a floor. All the cracks were stuffed tight with moss and mud, and a big bank of earth thrown up around the bottom of the wall to keep the draught out.

“But you should have seen the beds—or bunks, as they call them, for the men. I don’t believe you could ever sleep on them. They were nothing but board platforms all around three sides of the room, built on a slant so that your head was higher than your feet; so you see I’d have had nothing better than the soft side of a plank for a mattress if you hadn’t fitted me out with one. And when the other fellows saw how snug I was they vowed

they'd have a soft bed too; so what do you think they did? They gathered an immense quantity of hemlock branches—little soft ones, you know—and spread them thick over the boards, and then they laid blankets over that and made a really fine mattress for all. So that, you see, I quite set the fashion. The last thing to be made was the fireplace, which has the very queer name of 'camboose,' and is queerer than its name. It is right in the middle of the room, not at one end, and is as big as a small room by itself. First of all, a great bank of stones and sand is laid on the floor, kept together by boards at the edges. Then a large square hole is cut in the roof above, and a wooden chimney built on the top of it, and then at two of the corners cranes to hold the pots are fixed, and the camboose is complete. And oh, mother, such roaring big fires as were always going in it after the cold came—all night long, you know; and sometimes I had to stay awake to keep the fire from going out, which wasn't much fun; but, of course, I had to take my turn. So now, mother, you ought to have a pretty good idea of what our shanty was like, for besides a table and our chests there was nothing much else in it to describe."

Such were Frank Kingston's surroundings as he entered upon the humble and laborious duties of

chore-boy in Camp Kippewa, not attempting to conceal from himself that he would much rather be a chopper, or teamster, or road maker, but with his mind fully fixed upon doing his work, however uncongenial it might be, cheerfully and faithfully for one winter at least, feeling confident that if he did he would not be chore-boy for long, but would in due time be promoted to some more dignified and attractive position.

CHAPTER V.

STANDING FIRE.

THE shanty finished, a hugh mass of wood cut into convenient lengths and piled near the door, a smooth road made down to the river bank, the storehouse filled with barrels of pork and flour and beans and chests of tea, the stable for the score of horses, put up after much the same architectural design as the shanty, and then the lumber camp was complete, and the men were free to address themselves to the business that had brought them so far.

As Frank looked around him at the magnificent forests into whose heart they had penetrated, and tried with his eyes to measure the height of the splendid trees that towered above his head on every side, he found himself touched with a feeling of sympathy for them—as if it seemed a shame to humble the pride of those sylvan monarchs by bringing them crashing to the earth. And then this feeling gave way to another, and as he watched the expert choppers swinging their bright axes in steady rhythm, and adding wound to wound in the gaping trunk so skillfully that the defenseless monster fell just where

they wished, his heart thrilled with pride at man's easy victory over nature, and he longed to seize an ax himself and attack the forest on his own account.

He had plenty of ax work as it was, but of a much more prosaic kind. An important part of his duty consisted in keeping up the great fire that roared and crackled unceasingly in the caboose. The appetite of this fire seemed unappeasable, and many a time did his arms and legs grow weary in ministering to its wants. Sometimes, when all his other work was done, he would go out to the wood pile, and, selecting the thickest and toughest-looking logs, arrange them upon the hearth so that they might take as long as possible to burn, and then, congratulating himself that he had secured some respite from toil, get out his rifle for a little practice at a mark, or would open one of the few books he had brought with him. But it seemed to him he would hardly have more than one shot at the mark, or get through half a dozen pages, before Baptiste's thick voice would be heard calling out:

"Francois, Francois! Ver is yer? Some more wood, k'vick!" And with a groan poor Frank would have to put away the rifle or book and return to the wood pile.

"I suppose I'm what the Bible calls a hewer of wood

and a drawer of water," he would say to himself, for hardly less onerous than the task of keeping the fire in fuel was that of keeping well filled the two water barrels that stood on either side of the door, one for the thirsty shantymen, the other for Baptiste's culinary needs.

The season's work once well started, it went forward with commendable steadiness and vigor under Foreman Johnston's strict and energetic management. He was admirably suited for his difficult position. His grave, reserved manner rendered impossible that familiarity which is so apt to breed contempt, while his thorough mastery of all the secrets of woodcraft, his great physical strength, and his absolute fearlessness in the face of any peril, combined to make him a fit master for the strangely-assorted half-hundred of men now under his sole control. Frank held him in profound respect, and would have endured almost anything rather than seem unmanly or unheedful in his eyes. To win a word of commendation from those firm-set lips that said so little was the desire of his heart, and, feeling sure that it would come time enough, he stuck to his work bravely, quite winning good-natured Baptiste's heart by his prompt obedience to orders.

"You are a *bon garcon*, Francois," he would say, patting

his shoulder with his plump palm. "Too good to be chore-boy; but not for long: eh, Francois? You be chopper *bientot*, and then—" with an expressive wave of his hand to indicate the rapid flight of time—"you'll be foreman, like M'sieur Johnston, while Baptiste,"—and the broad shoulders would rise in that meaning shrug which only Frenchman can achieve,—“poor Baptiste will be cook still.”

Beginning with Johnston and Baptiste, Frank was rapidly making friends among his companions, and as he was soon to learn, much to his surprise and sorrow, some enemies too, or, rather, to be more correct, he was making the friends, but the enemies were making themselves; for he was to blame in small part, if at all for their rising against him. There were all sorts and conditions of men, so far at least as character and disposition went, among the gang, and the evil element was fitly represented by a small group of inhabitants who recognized one Damase Deschenaux as their leader. This Damase made rather a striking figure. Although he scorned the suggestion as hotly as would a Southern planter the charge that negro blood darkened his veins, there was no doubt that some generations back the dusky wife of a *courier du bois* had mingled the Indian nature with the French. Unhappily for Damase, the result of his ances-

tral error was manifest in him; for, while bearing but little outward resemblance to his savage progenitor, he was at heart a veritable Indian.

Greedy, selfish, jealous, treacherous, quick to take offense and slow to forgive or forget, his presence in the Johnston gang was explained by his wonderful knowledge of the forest, his sure judgment in selecting good bunches of timber to be cut, and his intimate acquaintance with the course of the stream down which the logs would be floated in the spring.

Johnston had no liking for Damase, but found him too valuable to dispense with. This year, by chance, or possibly by his own management, Damase had among the gang a number of companions much after his own pattern, and it was clearly his intention to take the lead in the shanty so far as he dared venture. When first he saw Frank, and learned that he was to be with Johnston also, he tried after his own fashion to make friends with him. But as might be expected, neither the man himself nor his overtures of friendship impressed Frank favorably. He wanted neither a pull from his pocket flask nor a chew from his plug of "Navy," nor to handle his greasy cards; and, although he declined the offer of all these uncongenial things as politely as possible, the veritable suspicious, sensitive, French-Indian nature took

offense, which deepened day after day, as he could not help seeing that Frank was careful to give himself and companions as wide a berth as he could without being pointedly rude or offensive.

When one is seeking to gratify evil feelings toward another with whom he has daily contact, the opportunity is apt to be not long in coming, and Damase conceived that he had his chance of venting his spite on Frank by seizing upon this habit of Bible reading and prayer which the lad had as scrupulously observed in the shanty as if he had been at home. As might be imagined, he was altogether alone in this good custom, and at first the very novelty of it had secured him immunity from pointed notice or comment. But when Damase, thinking he saw in his daily devotion an opening for his malicious purposes, drew attention to them by jeering remarks and taunting insinuations, the others, yielding to that natural tendency to be incensed with any one who seems to assert superior goodness, were inclined to side with him, or at all events to make no attempt to interfere.

At first Damase confined himself to making as much noise as possible while Frank was reading his Bible or saying his prayers, keeping up a constant fire of remarks that were aimed directly at the much-tried boy, and

which were sometimes clever or impertinent enough to call forth a hearty laugh from his comrades. But, finding that Frank was not to be overcome by this, he resorted to more active measures. Pretending to be dancing carelessly about the room he would, as if by accident, bump up against the object of his enmity, send the precious book flying on the floor, or, if Frank was kneeling by his bunk, tripping and tumbling roughly over his outstretched feet. Another time he knocked the Bible out of his hands with a well-aimed missile, and, again, covered him with a heavy blanket as he knelt at prayer.

All this Frank bore in patient silence, hoping in that way to secure peace in time. But Damase's persecutions showing no signs of ceasing, the poor lad's self-control began to desert him, and at last the crisis came one night when, while he was kneeling as usual at the foot of his bunk, Damase crept up softly behind him, and, springing upon his shoulders, brought him sprawling to the floor. In an instant Frank was on his feet, and when the others saw his flashing and indignant countenance and noticed his tight-clinched fists, the roar of laughter that greeted his downfall was checked half way, and a sudden silence fell upon them. They all expected him to fly at his tormentor like a young tiger,

and Damase evidently expected it too, for he stepped back a little, and his grinning face sobered as he assumed a defensive attitude.

But Frank had no thought of striking. That was not his way of defending his religion, much as he was willing to endure rather than be unfaithful. Drawing himself to his full height, and looking a splendid type of righteous indignation, he commanded the attention of all as in clear, strong tones, holding his sturdy fists close to his sides as though he dared not trust them elsewhere, and, looking straight into Damase's eyes, he exclaimed:

"Aren't you ashamed to do such an unmanly thing? You, who are twice my size and age! I have done nothing to you. Why should you torment me? And just when I want most to be quite too!"

Then, turning to the other men with a gesture of appeal that was irresistible, he cried:

"Do you think it's fair, fellows, for that man to plague me so when I've done him no harm? Why don't you stop him? You can do it easy enough. He's nothing but a big coward."

Frank's anger had risen as he spoke, and this last sentence slipped out before he had time to stop it. No sooner was it uttered than he regretted it; but the bolt had been shot and it went straight to its mark.

While Frank had been speaking, Damase was too keen of sight and sense not to notice that the manly speech and fine self-control of the boy were causing a quick revolution of feeling in his hearers, and that unless diverted they would soon be altogether on his side, and the taunt he had just flung out awoke a deep murmur of applause which was all that was needed to inflame his passion to the highest pitch. The Frenchman looked the very incarnation of fury as, springing toward Frank with uplifted fist, he hissed, rather cried, through his gleaming teeth :

“Coward! I teach you call me coward.”

Stepping back a little, Frank threw up his arms in a posture of defense; for he was not without knowledge of what is so oddly termed “the noble art.” But before the blow fell an unlooked-for intervention relieved him from the danger that threatened.

The foreman, when the shanty was being built, had the farther right-hand corner partitioned off so as to form a sort of cabin just big enough to contain his bunk, his chest, and a small rude table on which lay the books in which he kept his accounts and made memoranda, and some half-dozen volumes that constituted his library. In this nook, shut off from the observation of society of the others, yet able to overhear and, if he chose to

open the door, to oversee also all that went on in the larger room, Johnston spent his evenings poring over his books by the light of a tallow candle, the only other light in the room being that given forth by the ever-blazing fire.

Owing to this separation from the others, Johnston had been unaware of the manner in which Frank had been tormented, as it was borne so uncomplainingly. But this time Frank's indignant speech, followed so fast by Damase's angry retort, told him plainly that there was need of his interference. He emerged from his corner just at the moment when Damase was ready to strike. One glance at the state of affairs was enough. Damase's back was turned toward him. With a swift spring, that startled the others as if he had fallen through the roof, he darted forward, and ere the French-Canadian's fist could reach its mark a resistless grasp was laid upon his collar, and, swung clear off his feet, he was flung staggering across the room as though he had been a mere child.

"You Indian dog!" growled Johnston, in his fiercest tones. "What are you about? Don't let me catch you tormenting that boy again?"

CHAPTER VI.

LIFE IN THE LUMBER CAMP.

FOR a moment there was absolute silence in the shanty, the sudden and effectual intervention of the big foreman in Frank Kingston's behalf filling the lookers-on with astonishment. But then, as they recovered themselves, there came a burst of laughter that made the rafters ring, in the midst of which Damase, gathering himself together, slunk scowling to his berth with a face that was dark with hate.

Not deigning to take any further notice of him, Johnston turned to go back to his corner, touching Frank on his shoulder as he did so, and saying to him, in a low tone:

“Come with me, my lad; I want a word with you.”

Still trembling from the excitement of the scene through which he had just passed, Frank followed the foreman into his little sanctum, the inside of which he had never seen before, for it was kept jealously locked whenever its occupant was absent. Johnston threw himself down on his bunk, and motioned Frank to take a seat upon the chest. For a few moments he regarded

him in silence, and so intently that, although his expression was full of kindness, and it seemed of admiration, too, the boy felt his face flushing under his steady scrutiny. At last the foreman spoke.

“You’re a plucky lad, Frank. Just like your father—God bless him! He was a good friend to me when I needed a friend sorely. I heard all that went on to-night, though I didn’t see it, and had some hint of it before, though I didn’t let on; for I wanted to see what stuff you were made of. But you played the man, my boy, and your father would have been proud to see you. Now just you go right ahead, Frank; and if any of those French rascals or anybody else tries to hinder you, out of this shanty, he’ll go, neck and crop, and stay out, as sure as my name is Dan Johnston.”

“You’re very kind, Mr. Johnston,” said Frank, his eyes glistening somewhat suspiciously; for, to tell the truth, this warm praise coming after the recent strain upon his nerves, was a little too much for his self-control. “I felt sometimes like telling you when the men tormented me so; but I didn’t want to be a tattle-tale, and I was hoping they’d get tired of it and give up of their own accord.”

“It’s best as it is, lad,” replied Johnston. “If the men found out you told me, they’d be like to think hard

of you. But there's no fear of that now. And look here, Frank. After this, when you want to read your Bible in peace, and say your prayers, just come in here. No one 'll bother you here, and you can sit down on the chest there and have a quiet time to yourself."

Frank's face fairly beamed with delight at this unexpected invitation, and he stood up on his feet to thank his kind friend.

"Oh, Mr. Johnston, I'm so glad! I've never been able to read my Bible or say my prayers right since I came to the shanty—there's always such a noise going on. But I won't mind that in here. It's so good of you to let me come in."

The foreman smiled in his deep, serious way, and then as he relapsed into silence, and took up again the book he had laid down to spring to Frank's assistance, Frank thought it time to withdraw; and with a respectful "Good-night, sir," which Johnston acknowledged by a nod, returned to the larger room.

The shantymen were evidently awaiting his reappearance with much curiosity; but he went quietly back to his bunk, picked up his Bible, finished the passage in the midst of which he had been interrupted, and, having said his prayers, lay down to sleep without a word to any one; for no one questioned him, and he felt no dispo-

sition to start a discussion by questioning any of the others.

From this time forth he could see clearly that two very different opinions concerning himself prevailed in the shanty. By all the English members of the gang, and some of the French, headed by honest Baptiste, he was looked upon with hearty liking and admiration, as a plucky chap that knew how to take care of himself; by the remainder of the French contingent, with Damase as the ruling spirit, he was regarded as a stuck-up youngster that wanted taking down badly, and who was trying to make himself a special favorite with the foreman, just to advance his own selfish ends. Gladly would Frank have been on friendly terms with all, but this being now impossible, through no fault of his own, he made up his mind to go on his way as quietly as possible, being constantly careful to give no cause of offense to those who, as he well knew, were only too eager to take it.

There were some slight flurries of snow, fragile and short-lived heralds of winter's coming, during the latter part of November, and then December was ushered in by a grand storm, that lasted a whole day, and made glad the hearts of the lumbermen by filling the forest aisles with a deep, soft, spotless carpet, that asked only to be packed smooth and hard, in order to make perfect roads

over which to transport the noble logs that had been accumulating upon the "roll-ways" during the past weeks.

A shantyman is never so completely in his element as when the snow lies two feet deep upon the earth's brown breast. An open winter is his bane, Jack Frost his best friend; and there was a perceptible rise in the spirits of the occupants of Camp Kippewa as the mercury sank lower and lower in the tube of the foreman's thermometer. Plenty of snow meant not only easy hauling all winter long, but a full river and "high water" in the spring-time, and no difficulty in getting the drive of logs that would represent their winter's work, down the Kippewa to the Grand River beyond. Frank did not entirely share their exultation. The colder it got the more wood had to be chopped, the more food had to be cooked—for the men's appetites showed a marked increase—and furthermore, the task of keeping the water barrels filled became one of serious magnitude. But bracing himself to meet his growing burdens, he toiled away cheerfully, resisting every temptation to grumble, his clear tuneful whistling of the sacred airs in vogue at Calumet making Baptiste, who had a quick ear for music, so familiar with "Rock of Ages," "Abide with Me," "Nearer, my God, to Thee," and other melodies,

which have surely strayed down to us from heaven, that unconsciously he took to whistling them himself, much to Frank's amusement and approval.

The days were very much alike. At early dawn, before it was yet light enough to see clearly, Johnston would emerge from his corner, and in stentorian tones, whose meaning was not to be mistaken, shout to the sleeping men scattered along the rows of sloping bunks, "Up with ye, men! Up with ye." And with many a growl and grunt they would, one by one, unroll from their blankets. As their only preparation for bed had been to lay aside their coats and boots or moccasins, the morning toilet did not consume much time. A dash of cold water as an eye-opener, a tugging on of boots, or lacing up of moccasins, a scrambling into coats, and that was the sum of it. The only brush and comb in the camp belonged to Frank, and he felt half ashamed to use them because no one else thought such articles necessary.

Breakfast hurriedly disposed off, all but Baptiste and Frank sallied forth into the snow, to be seen no more until midday. There were just fifty persons, all told, in the camp, each man having his definite work to do: the carpenter, whose business it was to keep the sleighs in repair; the teamsters, who directed the hauling of the logs; the "sled-tenders," who saw that the loads were

well put on; the "head chopper" and his assistants, whose was the laborious yet fascinating task of felling the forest monarchs; the "sawyers," who cut their prostrate forms into convenient lengths; the "scorers," who stripped off the branches and slab sides from tree trunks set apart for square timber; and finally, the "hewer," who with his huge broad-ax, made square the "stick," as the great piece of timber is called.

All these men had to be fed three times a day, and almost insatiable were their appetites, as poor Frank had no chance to forget. Happily they did not demand the same variety on their bill of fare as do the guests at a metropolitan hotel. Pork and beans, bread and tea, these were the staple items. Anything else was regarded as an "extra." A rather monotonous diet, undoubtedly, but it would not be easy to prescribe a better one for men working twelve hours a day, in the open air, through the still steady cold of a Canadian winter in the back-woods.

At noon the hungry toilers trooped back for dinner, which they devoured in ravenous haste that there might be as much as possible left of the hour for a lounge upon the bunk, with pipe in mouth, in luxurious idleness. Then as the dusk gathered they appeared once more, this time for the night, and disposed to eat their supper with

much more decorous slowness. Supper over, the snow-soaked mittens and stockings hung about the fire to dry, and pipes put in full blast, they were ready for song, story, or dance, until bed time.

Thus day followed day, until Frank, whose work kept him closely confined to the camp, grew so weary of it that he was on the verge of heartily repenting that he had ever consented to be a chore-boy, ever thought that was the only condition upon which he could gratify his longing for a lumberman's life, when another mischance became his good fortune, and he was unexpectedly relieved of a large part of his tiresome duties. This was how it came about.

One morning he was surprised by seeing one of the sleighs returning a good while before the dinner hour, and was somewhat alarmed when he noticed that it bore the form of a man, who had evidently been the victim of an accident. Happily, however, it proved to be not a very serious case. An immense pine in falling headlong had borne with it a number of smaller trees that stood near by, and one of these fell upon an unwary "scorer," hurling him to the ground, and badly bruising his right leg, besides causing some internal injury. He was insensible when picked up, but came to himself soon after reaching the shanty, where Frank made him as comfort-

able as he could, even putting him upon his own mattress that he might lie as easy as possible.

The injured man proved to be one of Damase Desche-naux's allies; but Frank did not let that prevent his showing him every kindness while he was recovering from his injuries, with the result of completely winning the poor ignorant fellow's heart, much to Damase's disgust. Damase, indeed, did his best to persuade Laberge that Frank's attentions were prompted by some secret motive, and that it was not to be trusted. But deeds are far stronger arguments than words, and the sufferer was not to be convinced. By the end of a week he was able to limp about the shanty, but it was very evident that he would not be fit to take up his work again that season. This state of affairs caused the foreman some concern, for he felt loth to send the unfortunate fellow home, and yet he could not keep him in idleness. Then it appeared that what is one man's extremity may be another's opportunity. Johnston knew very well that however bravely he might go about it, Frank's work could not help being distasteful to him, and a bright plan flashed into his mind. Calling Frank into his corner one evening, he said :

“How would you like, my lad, to have some of the out-door work, for a change?”

The mere expression of Frank's face was answer enough. It fairly shone with gladness, as he replied :

"I would like it above all things, sir ; for I am a little tired of being nothing but a chore-boy."

"Well, I think we might manage it, Frank," said the foreman. "You see, Laberge can't do his work again this winter, and it goes against my heart to send him home, for he's nobody but himself to depend upon. So I've hit upon this plan : Laberge can't chop the wood or haul the water, but he can help Baptiste in cooking and cleaning up. Suppose, then, you were to get the wood ready and see about the water in the morning, and then come out into the woods with us after dinner, leaving Laberge to do the rest of the work. How would that suit you?"

"It would suit me just splendidly, sir," exclaimed Frank, delightedly. "I can see about the wood and water all right before dinner, and I'll be so glad to go to the woods with you. I'll just do the best I can to fill Laberge's place."

"I'm right sure you will, Frank," replied Johnston. "So you may consider it settled for the present, at any rate."

Frank felt like dancing a jig on the way back to his bunk, and not even the scowling face of Damase, who

had been listening to the conversation in the foreman's room with keen Indian ears, and had caught enough of it to learn of the arrangement made, could cast any damper upon his spirits. In this case half a loaf was decidedly better than no bread at all. Freedom from the restraints and irksome duties of chore-boy's lot for even half the day was a precious boon, and the happy boy lay down to rest that night feeling like quite a different person from what he had been of late, when there seemed no way of escape from the monotonous, wearisome task he had taken upon himself, except to give it all up and return to Calumet, which was almost the last thing that he could imagine himself doing; for Frank Kingston had plenty of pride as well as pluck, and his love for lumbering had not suffered any eclipse because of his experiences.

But what is one man's meat is another man's poison, according to the homely adage, and in this case what made Frank so happy made Damase miserable. The jealous, revengeful fellow saw in it only another proof of the foreman's favoritism, and was also pleased to regard the relegating of Laberge to the dish washing and so forth as the degradation of a compatriot, which it behooved him to resent, since Laberge seemed lacking in the spirit to do it himself. Had he imagined that he

would meet with the support of the majority, he would have sought to organize a rebellion in the camp. But he knew well enough that such a thing was utterly out of the question, so he was forced to content himself with fresh determinations to "get even" with the foreman and his favorite in some way before the winter passed, and, as will be seen, he came perilously near attaining his object.

CHAPTER VII.

A THRILLING EXPERIENCE.

FRANK was very happy, now that the way had been so opportunely opened for him to take part in the whole round of lumbering operations. He awaited with impatience the coming of noon and the rush of hungry men to their hearty dinner, because it was the signal for his release from chore-boy work and promotion to the more honorable position of assistant-teamster. The long afternoons out in the cold, crisp air, amid the thud of well-aimed axes, the crash of falling trees, the shouts of busy men, and all the other noisy incidents of the war they were waging against the innocent, defenseless forest, were precisely what his heart had craved so long, and he felt clearer than ever in his mind that lumbering was the life for him.

After he had been a week at his new employment, Con Murphy, the big teamster to whom he had been assigned by the foreman, with the injunction to "be easy on the lad, and give him plenty of time to get handy," was heard to say in public :

"Faith, an' he's a broth of a boy, I can tell you ; and

I wouldn't give him for half a dozen of those *parlez vous* Frenchies like the chap whose place he took—indeed that I wouldn't."

Which, coming to Damase's ears, added further fuel to the fire of jealousy and hate that was burning within this half-savage creature's breast. So fierce indeed were Damase's feelings that he could not keep them concealed, and more than one of the shantymen took occasion to drop a word of warning into Frank's ear about him.

"You'd better keep a sharp eye on that chap, Damase, Frank," they would say. "He's an ugly customer, and he seems to have got it in for you."

Frank on his part was by no means disposed to laugh at or neglect these kindly warnings. Indeed, he fully intended repeating them to Johnston at the first opportunity. But the days slipped by without a favorable chance presenting itself, and Damase's wild thirst for the revenge which he thought was merited came perilously near a dreadful satisfaction.

February had come, and supplies at the shanty were running low, so that Foreman Johnston deemed it necessary to pay a visit to the depot to see about having a fresh stock sent out. The first that Frank knew of his intention was the night before he started. He had gone

into the foreman's little room as usual to read his Bible and pray, and having finished was about to slip quietly out, Johnston having apparently been quite unobservant of his presence, when he was asked:

"How would you like to go over to the depot with me to-morrow?"

How would he like! Such a question to ask of a boy, when it meant a twenty-five mile drive and a whole day's holiday after months of steady work at the camp!

"I should be delighted, sir," replied Frank, as promptly as he could get the words out.

"Very well, then; you can come along with me. We'll start right after breakfast. Baptiste will have to look after himself for one day," said the foreman. And with a fervent "Thank you, sir," Frank went off, his face wreathed with smiles and his heart throbbing with joy at the prospect before him.

So eager was he that it did not need Johnston's shout of "Turn out, lads, turn out!" to waken him next morning, for he was wide awake already, and he tumbled into his clothes with quite unusual alacrity. So soon as breakfast was over, the foreman had one of the best horses in the stable harnessed to his "jumper," as the low, strong, comfortable wooden sleigh that is alone able to cope with the rough forest roads is called; abundance

of thick warm buffalo-robcs were provided ; and then he and Frank tucked themselves in tightly, and they set out on their long drive to the depot.

The mercury stood at twenty degrees below zero when they started, but they did not mind that. Not a breath of wind stirred the clear cold air. The sun soon rose into the blue vault above them, and shone down upon the vast expanse of snow about them with a vigor that made their eyes blink. The horse was a fine animal, and, having been off duty for a few days previous, was full of speed and spirit, and they glided over the well beaten portion of the road at a dashing pace. But when they came to the part over which there had been little travel all winter long the going was too heavy for much speed, and often the horse could not do more than walk.

This seemed to Frank just the opportunity for which he had been waiting, to tell the foreman about Damase and his threats of revenge. At first Johnston was disposed to make light of the matter, but when Frank told him what he had himself observed, as well as what had been reported to him by the others, the foreman was sufficiently impressed to say :

“The rascal wants some looking after, that’s clear. He’s a worthless fellow, anyway, and I’m mighty sorry I

ever let him into my gang. I think the best thing will be to drop him as soon as I get back, or he may make some trouble for us. I'm glad you told me this, Frank. I won't forget it."

At the depot they found Alec Stewart, just returned from a tour of inspection of the different camps, and full of hearty welcome. He was very glad to see Frank.

"Ah! ha! my boy," he cried, slapping him vigorously on the back. "I needn't ask you how you are. Your looks answer for you. Why, you must weigh ten pounds more than when I last saw you. Well, what do you think of lumbering now, and how does Mr. Johnston treat you? They tell me," looking at the foreman with a sly smile, "that he's a mighty stiff boss. Is that the way you find him?"

Frank was ready enough to answer all his friend's questions, and to assure him that the foreman treated him like a kind father, and that he himself was fonder of lumbering than ever. Both he and Johnston had famous appetites for the bountiful dinner that was soon spread before them, and, the resources of the depot permitting of a much more extensive bill of fare than was possible at the shanty, he felt in duty bound to apologize for the avidity with which he attacked the juicy roast of beef, the pearly potatoes, the toothsome pudding, and the other

dainties that, after months of pork and beans, tasted like ambrosia.

The superintendent and the foreman had much to say to one another which did not concern Frank, and so while they talked business he roamed about the place, enjoying the freedom from work and chatting with the men at the barn, telling them some of his experiences and being told some of theirs in return. Happening to mention Damase Deschenaux, one of the men at once exclaimed :

“That’s a first-class scoundrel ! It beats me to understand why Johnston has him in his gang. He’s sure to raise trouble wherever he goes.”

Frank felt tempted to tell how Damase had “raised trouble” with him, but thought he would better not, and the talk soon turned in another direction.

The afternoon was waning before Johnston prepared to start on the return journey, and Mr. Stewart tried hard to persuade him to stay for the night—an invitation that Frank devoutly hoped would be accepted. But the big foreman would not hear of it.

“No, no,” said he, in his decided way, “I must get back to the shanty. There’s been only half a day’s work done to-day, I’ll warrant you, because I wasn’t on hand to keep the beggars at it. Why, they’ll lie abed till mid-

day to-morrow if I'm not there to rouse them out of their bunks."

Whatever Johnston said he stuck to, so there was no use in argument, and shortly after four o'clock he and Frank tucked themselves snugly into the jumper again and drove away from the depot, Stewart shouting after them :

"If you change your mind after you've gone a couple of miles, don't feel delicate about coming back. I won't laugh at you."

Johnston's only answer was a grim smile and a crack of the whip over the horse's hind-quarters that sent him off at full gallop, the snow flying in clouds from his plunging feet into the faces of his passengers.

The hours crept by as the sleigh made its slow way over the heavy road, and Frank, as might be expected after the big dinner he had eaten, began to feel very sleepy. There was no reason why he should not yield to the seductive influence of the drowsy god ; so, sinking down low into the seat and drawing the buffalo-robe up over his head, he soon was lost to sight and sense. While he slept the night fell, and they were still many miles from home. The cold was great, but not a breath of wind stirred the intense stillness. The stars shone out like flashing diamonds set in lapis-lazuli. Silence reigned

supreme, save as it was intruded upon by the heavy breathing of the frost-flaked horse and the crunching of the runners through the crisp snow.

Johnston felt glad when they breasted the hill on the other side of which was Deep Gully, crossed by a rude corduroy bridge ; for that bridge was just five miles from the camp, and another hour, at the farthest, would bring them to the end of their journey.

When the top of the hill was reached, the foreman gathered up the reins, called upon the horse to quicken his pace, and away they went down the slope at a tearing gallop.

Deep Gully well deserved the name that had been given it when the road was made. A turbulent torrent among the hills had in the course of time eaten a way for itself which, although very narrow, made up for its lack of breadth by a great degree of depth. It was a rather picturesque place in summer time, when abundant foliage softened its steep sides, but in winter, when it seemed more like a crevasse in a glacier than anything else, there was no charm about it. The bridge that crossed it was a very simple affair, consisting merely of two long stringers laid six feet apart, and covered with flattened timbers.

Upon this slight structure the jumper descended with

a bump that woke Frank from his pleasant nap, and, putting aside the buffalo robe, he sat up in the sleigh to gather his wits. It was well he did, for if ever he needed them it was at that moment. Almost simultaneous with the thud of the horse's feet upon the bridge there came a crash, a sound of rending timbers, the bridge quivered like a ship struck by a mighty billow, and the next instant dropped into the chasm below, bearing with it a man, and boy, and horse, and sleigh !

Full thirty feet they fell ; the bridge, which had given way at one end only, hurling them from it so that they landed at the bottom of Deep Gully in a confused heap, yet happily free from entanglement with its timbers. So soon as he felt himself falling Frank threw aside the robes and made ready to spring, but Johnston instinctively held on to the reins, with the result that, being suddenly dragged forward by the frantic plunging of the terrified animal, he received a kick in the forehead that rendered him insensible, and would have dashed his brains out but for the thick fur cap he wore, while the jumper, turning over upon him, wrenched his leg so as to render him completely helpless.

Frank was more fortunate. His timely spring, aided by the impetus of their descent, carried him clear of the horse and sleigh, and sent him headlong into a deep drift

that filled a hollow at the gully's bottom. The snow-bank opened its arms to receive him, and buried him to the hips. The first shock completely deprived him of breath, and almost of his senses too. But beyond that he received no injury, and was soon struggling with all his might to free himself from the snow that held him captive. This proved to be no easy task. He was pretty firmly embedded, and at first it seemed as though his efforts at release only made his position worse.

"This is a fine fix to be in!" said he to himself. "Buried in a snow drift, and dear knows what's happened to Mr. Johnston."

He had been hoping that the foreman would come to his assistance, but, getting no reply to his shouts, he began to fear lest his companion might be unable to render any help. Perhaps, indeed, he might be dead! The thought roused him to still greater exertions, and at last by a heroic effort he succeeded in turning a kind of somersault in his cold prison, which had the happy result of putting his head where his heels had been. To scramble out altogether was then an easy job, and in another instant he was beside the sleigh.

His first thought was that his worst fears were realized. Certainly the sight was one that might have filled a stouter heart with chill alarm. The horse had fallen into

a deep drift, which covered him to the shoulders, and rendered him utterly helpless, entangled as he was with the harness and the overturned jumper. He had evidently, like Frank, been struggling violently to free himself, but, finding it useless, had for a time ceased his efforts, and stood wild-eyed and panting, the picture of animal terror. On seeing Frank, he made another frantic plunge or two, looking at the boy with an expression of agonized appeal, as though he would say:

“Oh, help me out of this dreadful place!”

And glad would Frank have been to respond to the best of his ability. But the poor horse could not be considered first. Half under the sleigh, half-buried in the snow, lay the big foreman, to all appearance dead, the blood flowing freely from an ugly gash in his forehead, where the fur cap had failed to protect him entirely from the horse's hoof.

Frank sprang to his side, and with a tremendous effort turned him over upon his back, and, getting out his handkerchief, wiped the blood away from his face. As he did so, the first awful thought of death gave way to a feeling of hope. White and still as Johnston lay, his face was warm, and he was surely breathing a little. Seizing a handful of snow, Frank pressed it to the foreman's forehead, and cried to him as though he were asleep.

"Mr. Johnston, Mr. Johnston! What's the matter with you? Tell me, won't you?"

For some minutes there was no sign of response. Then the injured man stirred, gave a deep sigh, followed by a groan, opened his eyes with a look of dazed bewilderment, and put his hand up to his head, which was evidently giving him intense pain.

"Oh, Mr. Johnston, I'm so glad! I was afraid you were dead," exclaimed Frank. "Can't I help you to get up?"

Turning upon his shoulder, the foreman made an effort to raise himself, but at once sank back with a groan.

"I'm sore hurt, my lad," he said; "I can't stir. You'll have to get help."

And so great was his suffering that he well-nigh lost consciousness again.

Frank tried his best to lift him away from the sleigh, but found the task altogether beyond his young strength in that deep snow, and had to give it up as hopeless. Certainly he was in a most trying situation for a mere boy—fully five miles from the shanty, with an almost untraveled road between that must be traversed by him alone while the injured man would lie helpless in the snow until his return. Little wonder if he felt in sore perplexity as to what should be done, and how he should act under the circumstances.

CHAPTER VIII.

IN THE NICK OF TIME.

IF Frank was undecided Mr. Johnston's mind was fully made up.

"Our only chance is for you to get to the shanty at once, Frank. It'll be a hard job, my boy, but you'll have to try it," said he.

"But what'll become of you, sir, staying here all alone? The wolves might find you out, and how could you defend yourself then?" asked Frank, in sore bewilderment as to the solution of the dilemma.

"I'll have to take my chances of that, Frank, for if I stay here all night I'll freeze to death, anyway; so just throw the buffaloes over me and put for the shanty as fast as you can," replied the foreman.

Unable to suggest any better plan, Frank covered Johnston carefully with the robes, making him as comfortable as he could, then buttoning up his coat and pulling his cap on tightly he was about to scramble up the steep side of the gully to regain the road when the foreman said, in a low tone, almost a whisper:

"This is about the time you generally say your

prayers, Frank. Couldn't you say them here before you start?"

With quick intuition Frank divined the big bashful man's meaning. It was his roundabout way of asking the boy to commit him to the care of God before leaving him alone in his helplessness.

Feeling half condemned at not having thought of it himself, Frank came back and, kneeling close beside his friend, lifted up his voice in prayer with a fervor and simplicity that showed how strong and sure was his faith in the love and power of his Father in heaven. When he had finished his petition, the foreman added to it an "Amen" that seemed to come from the very depths of his heart, and then, yielding to an impulse that was irresistible, Frank bent down and implanted a sudden kiss upon the pale face looking at him with such earnest, anxious eyes. This unexpected proof of warm affection completely overcame the foreman, whose feelings had been already deeply stirred by the prayer. Strong, reserved man as he was, he could not keep back the tears.

"God bless you, my boy," he murmured, huskily. "If I get safely out of this I shall be a different man. You have taught me a lesson I won't forget."

"God bless you and take care of you, sir," answered

Frank. "I hope nothing will happen to you while I'm away, and I'll be back as soon as I can."

The next moment he was making his way up the gully's side, and soon a triumphant shout announced that he had reached the road and was off for the lumber camp at his best speed.

The task before him was one from which many a grown man might have shrunk in dismay. For five long lonely miles the road ran through the forest that darkened it with heavy shadows, and not a living soul could he hope to meet until he reached the shanty.

It was now past eight o'clock, and to do his best, it would take him a whole hour to reach his goal. The snow lay deep upon the road, and was but little beaten down by the few sleighs that had passed over it. The air was keen and crisp with frost, the temperature being many degrees below zero. And finally, the most fear-inspiring of all, there was the possibility of wolves; for the dreaded timber wolf had been both heard and seen in close proximity to the camp of late, an unusual scarcity of small game having made him daring in his search for food.

But Frank possessed a double source of strength. He was valiant by nature and he had implicit faith in God's overruling providence. He felt specially under the

divine care now, and, resolutely putting away all thoughts of personal danger, addressed himself, mind and body, to the one thing—the relief of Johnston from his perilous position.

With arms braced at his sides and head bent forward he set out at a jog-trot, which was better suited for getting through the deep snow than an ordinary walk. Fortunately he was in the very pink of condition. The steady hard work of the preceding months, combined with the coarse but abundant food and early hours, had developed and strengthened every muscle in his body and hardened his constitution until few boys of his age could have been found better fitted to endure a long tramp through heavy snow than he. Moreover, running had always been his favorite form of athletic exercise, and the muscles it required were well trained for their work.

“I’ll do it all right inside the hour,” he said to himself. And then, as a sudden thought struck him, he gave a nervous little laugh, and added, “And perhaps make a good deal better time if I hear anything of the wolves.”

Try as he might, he could not get the wolves out of his head. He had not himself seen any signs of them, but several times the choppers working farthest from the camp had mentioned finding their tracks in the snow, and once they had been heard howling in the distance

after the men had all come into the shanty for the night.

On he went through the snow and night, now making good progress at his brisk jog-trot, now going more slowly as he dropped into a walk to rest himself and recover breath. Although the moon rode high in the heavens, the trees which stood close to the road allowed few of her beams to light his path.

"If it was only broad daylight I wouldn't mind it a bit," Frank soliloquized; "but this going alone at this time of night is not the sort of a job I care for."

And then the thought of poor Johnston lying helpless but uncomplaining in the snow made him feel ashamed of his words, and to ease his conscience he broke into a trot again. Just as he did so, a sound reached his ear that sent a thrill of terror to his heart. Hoping he might be mistaken he stopped, and listened with straining senses. For a moment there was absolute silence. Then the sound came again—distant, but clear and unmistakable. He had heard it only once before, yet he felt as sure of it now as if it had been his mother's voice. It was the howl of the timber wolf sounding through the still night air from somewhere to the north; how far away he could not determine.

For a moment all his strength seemed to leave him.

How helpless he was alone in that mighty forest without even so much as a knife wherewith to defend himself! But it would not do to stand irresolute. His own life as well as the foreman's depended upon his reaching the shanty. Were he to climb one of the big trees that stood around, the wolves, of course, could not get at him; but Johnston would be dead before daylight came to release him from his tree citadel, and perhaps he would himself fall a victim to the cold in that exposed situation. There was no other alternative than to run for his life, so, breathing out a fervent prayer for divine help and protection, he summoned all his energies to the struggle. He was more than a mile from the shanty, and his exertion had told severely upon his strength; but the great peril of his situation made him forget his weariness, and he started off as if he were perfectly fresh.

But the howling of the wolves grew more and more distinct as they drew swiftly nearer, and with agony of heart the poor boy felt his breath coming short and his limbs beginning to fail beneath him. Nearer and nearer came his dreaded pursuers, and every moment he expected to see them burst into the road behind him.

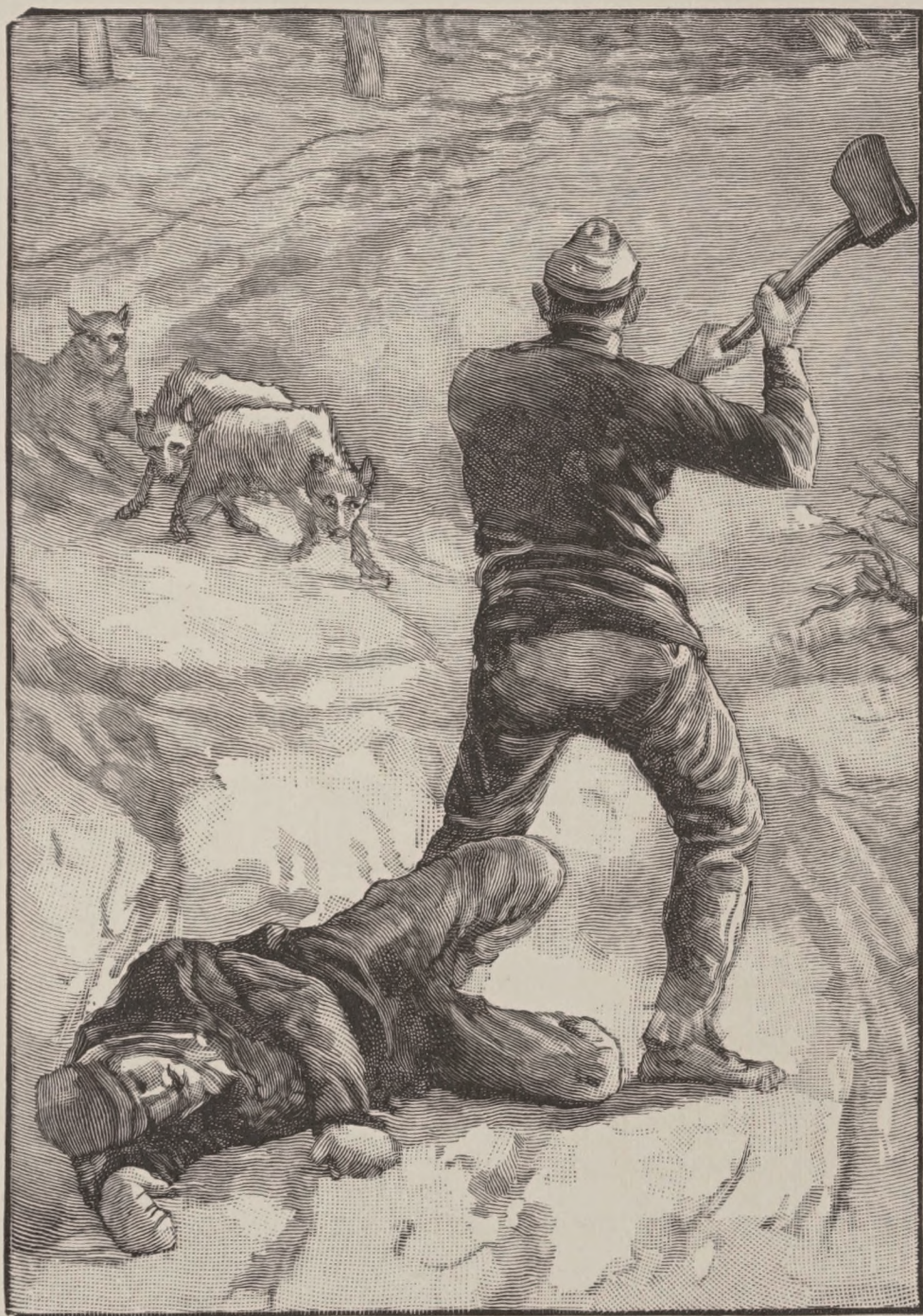
Fortunately, he had reached a part of the road which, being near the camp, was much used by the teams drawing logs to the river bank, and was consequently beaten

hard and smooth. This welcome change enabled him to quicken his steps, which had dropped into a walk, and although he felt almost blind from exhaustion, he pushed desperately forward, hoping at every turn of the road to catch a glimpse of the shanty showing dark through the trees. The cry of the disciples caught in the sudden storm on Galilee, "Lord, save us, we perish!" kept coming to his lips as he staggered onward. Surely there could not be much further to go! He turned for a moment to look behind him. The wolves were in sight, their dark forms showing distinctly against the snow as in silence now they gained upon their prey. Run as hard as he might, they must be upon him ere another fifty yards were passed. He felt as if it were all over with him, and so utter was his exhaustion that it seemed to benumb his faculties and make him half willing for the end to come.

But the end was not to be as the wolves desired. Just at the critical moment when further exertion seemed impossible he caught sight of some one approaching him rapidly from the direction of the shanty and shouting aloud while he rushed forward to meet him. With one last supreme effort he plunged toward this timely apparition, and a moment later fell insensible at his feet.

It was Baptiste, good-heated, affectionate Baptiste, who, having awaited the travelers' return and grown concerned at their long delay, had gone out to look along the road to see if they were anywhere in view. Catching sight of Frank's lonely figure, he had made all haste to meet him, and reached him just in time to ward off the wolves that in a minute more would have been upon him.

When the wolves saw Baptiste, who swung a gleaming ax about his head as he shouted, "*Chiens donc!* I'll split your heads eef I get at you!" they stopped short, and even retreated a little, drawing themselves together in a sort of group in the middle of the road, snapping their teeth and snarling in a half-frightend, half-furious manner. But Baptiste was not to be daunted. Lifting his ax on high, he shouted at them in his choicest French and charged upon the pack as though they had been simply a flock of marauding sheep. Wolves are arrant cowards, and without pausing to take into consideration the disparity of numbers, for they stood twelve to one, they fled, ignominiously before the plucky Frenchman, not halting until they had put fifty yards between themselves and him. Whereupon Baptiste seized upon the opportunity to pick up the still senseless Frank, throw him over his broad shoulder, and



The Chore Boy of Camp Kippewa.

hasten back to the shanty before the wolves should regain their self-possession.

They were all asleep in the shanty when the cook returned with his unconscious burden, but he soon roused the others with his vigorous shouts, and by the time they were fully awake Frank was awake too, the warm air of the room quickly reviving him from his faint. Looking round about with a bewildered expression, he asked anxiously:

“Where is Mr. Johnston? Hasn’t he come back too?”

Then he recollected himself, and a picture of his good friend lying prostrate and helpless in the snow, perhaps surrounded by the same wolves that brave Baptiste had rescued him from, flashed into his mind, and, springing to his feet, he cried:

“Hurry—hurry! Mr. Johnston is in Deep Gully, and he can’t move. The bridge broke under us and he was almost killed. Oh, hurry, won’t you, or the wolves will be after him!”

The men looked at one another in astonishment and horror.

“Deep Gully!” they exclaimed. “That’s five miles off. We must go at once.”

And immediately all was bustle and excitement as they

prepared to go out into the night. As lumbermen always sleep in their clothes they did not take long to dress, and in a wonderfully short space of time the teamsters had a sleigh with a pair of horses at the door, upon which eight of the men, armed with guns and axes, sprang, and off they went along the road as fast as the horses could gallop. Frank wanted to accompany them, but Baptiste would not allow him.

“No, no, *mon cher*. You must stay wid me. You tired out. They get him all right and bring him safe home.”

And he was fain to lie back so tortured with anxiety for the foreman that he could hardly appreciate the blessing of rest, although his own exertions had been tremendous.

Not sparing the horses, the rescuers sped over the road, ever now and then discharging a gun, in order to let Johnston know of their approach and keep his courage up. In less than half an hour they reached the gully, and, peering over the brink, beheld the dark heap in the snow below that was the object of their search. One glance was sufficient to show how timely was their coming, for almost encircling the hapless man were smaller shapes that even at that distance could be readily recognized.

"We're too late!" cried one of the men. "They're wolves." And with a wild shout he flung himself recklessly down the snowy slope, and others followed close behind.

Before their tumultuous onset the wolves fled like leaves before the autumn wind, and poor Johnston, almost dead with pain, cold, and exhaustion, raising himself a little from the snow, called out in a faint but joyful tone:

"Thank God, you've come in time. I thought it was all over with me."

CHAPTER IX.

OUT OF CLOUDS, SUNSHINE.

GREAT was the joy of the men at finding Johnston alive and still able to speak, and at once their united strength was applied to extricating him from his painful position. The poor horse, utterly unable to help himself, had long ago given up the vain struggle, and in a state of pitiful exhaustion and fright, was lying where he first fell, the snow all about him being torn up in a way that showed how furious had been his struggles. Johnston had, by dint of heroic exertion, managed to withdraw his leg a little from underneath the heavy jumper, but he could not free himself altogether, so that had the wolves found out how completely both horse and man were in their power, they would have made short work of both. Fortunately, by vigorous shouting and wild waving of his arms, the foreman had been able to keep the cowardly creatures at bay long enough to allow the rescuing party to reach him. But he could not have kept up many minutes more, and if strength and voice had entirely forsaken him the dreadful end would soon have followed.

Handling the injured man with a tenderness and care one would hardly have looked for in such rough fellows, the lumbermen after no small exertion got him up out of the Gully and laid him upon the sleigh in the road. Then the horse was released from the jumper, and, being coaxed to his feet, led down the Gully to where the sides were not so steep and he could scramble up, while the jumper itself was left behind to be recovered when they had more time to spare.

Before they started off for the shanty one of the men had the curiosity to cross the Gully and examine the bridge where it broke, in order to find out the cause of the accident. When he returned there was a strange expression on his face, which added to the curiosity of the others who were awaiting his report.

“Both stringers are sawed near through!” he exclaimed. “And it’s not been done long, either. Must have been done to-day, for the sawdust’s lying round still.”

The men looked at one another in amazement and horror. The stringers sawed through! What scoundrel could have done such a thing? Who was the murderous traitor in their camp? Then to the quickest-witted of them came the thought of Damase’s dire threat and consuming jealousy.

“I know who did it,” he cried. “There’s only one man in the camp villain enough to do it. It was that hound, Damase, as sure as I stand here!”

Instantly the others saw the matter in the same light. Damase had done it beyond a doubt, hoping thereby to have the revenge for which his savage heart thirsted. Ill would it have gone with him could the men have laid hands on him at that moment. They were just in the mood to have inflicted such punishment as would probably have put the wretch in a worse plight than his intended victim, and many and fervent were their vows of vengeance, expressed in language rather the reverse of polite. Strict almost to severity as Johnston was in his management of the camp, the majority of the men, including all the best elements, regarded him with deep respect, if not affection; and that Damase Descheaux should make so dastardly attempt upon his life aroused in them a storm of indignant wrath which would not soon be allayed.

They succeeded in making the sufferer quite comfortable upon the sleigh, but they had to go very slowly on the return journey to the shanty, both to make it easy for Johnston and because the men had to walk, now that the sleigh was occupied. So soon as they came in sight, Frank ran to meet them, calling out eagerly:

"Is he all right? Have you got him?"

"We've got him, Frank, safe enough," replied the driver of the sleigh. "But we wasn't a minute too soon, I can tell you. I guess you must have sent your wolves off to him when you'd done with them."

"Were the wolves at you, sir?" exclaimed Frank, bending over the foreman, and looking anxiously into his face.

Johnston had fallen into a sort of doze or stupor, but the stopping of the sleigh and Frank's anxious voice aroused him, and he opened his eyes with a smile that told plainly how dear to him the boy had become.

"They weren't quite at me, Frank, but they soon would have been if the men hadn't come along," he replied.

With exceeding tenderness, the big helpless man was lifted from the sleigh and placed in his own bunk in the corner. The whole shanty was awake to receive him, a glorious fire roared and crackled upon the hearth, and the pleasant fragrance of fresh brewed tea filled the room. So soon as the foreman's outer garments had been removed, Frank brought him a pannikin of the lumberman's pet beverage, and he drank it eagerly, saying that it was all the medicine he needed. Beyond making him as comfortable as possible, nothing further could be done for him, and in a little while the shanty-

men were all asleep again as soundly as though there had been no disturbance of their slumbers. Frank wanted to sit up with Johnston, but the foreman would not hear of it, and, anyway, thoroughly sincere as was his offer, he never could have carried it out, for he was very weary himself and ready to drop asleep at the first chance.

Of Damase there was no sign. Some of the men had noticed him quitting work earlier than usual in the afternoon, and when he did not appear at supper time had thought he was gone off hunting, which he loved to do whenever he got the opportunity. Whether or not he would have the assurance to return to the shanty would depend upon whether he had waited in ambush to see the result of his villainy, for if he had done so, and had witnessed the at least partial failure of his plot, there was little chance of his being seen again.

The next morning a careful examination of Johnston showed that, while no bones were broken, his right leg had been very badly twisted and strained, almost to dislocation, and he had been internally injured to an extent that could be determined only by a doctor. It was decided to send a message for the nearest doctor, and meanwhile to do everything possible for the sufferer in the way of bandages and liniments that the simple shanty outfit

afforded. By general understanding, Frank assumed the duties of nurse, and it was not long before life at the camp settled down into its accustomed routine, Johnston having appointed the most experienced and reliable of the gang its foreman during his confinement. In due time the doctor came, examined his patient, made everybody glad by announcing that none of the injuries were serious, and that they required only time and attention for their cure, wrote out full directions for Frank to follow, and then, congratulating Johnston upon his good fortune in having so devoted and intelligent a nurse, set off again on the long drive to his distant home with the pleasant consciousness of having done his duty and earned a good fee.

The weeks that followed were the happiest Frank spent that winter. His duties as nurse were not onerous, and he enjoyed very much the importance with which they invested him. So long as his patient was well looked after, he was free to come and go according to his inclinations, and the thoughtful foreman saw to it that he spent at least half the day in the open air, often sending him with messages to the men working far off in the woods. Frank always carried his rifle with him on these tramps, and frequently brought back with him a brace of hares or partridges, which, having had the benefit of

Baptiste's skill, were greatly relished by Johnston, who found his appetite for the plain fare of the shanty much dulled by his confinement.

As the days slipped by the foreman began to open his heart to his young companion and to tell him much about his boyhood, which deeply interested Frank. Living a frontier life, he had his full share of adventure in hunting, lumbering, and prospecting for limits, and many an hour was spent reviewing the past. One evening while they were thus talking together Johnston became silent and fell into a sort of reverie, from which he presently roused himself, and, looking very earnestly into Frank's face, asked him :

“Have you always been a Christian, Frank?”

The question came so unexpectedly and was so direct, that Frank was quite taken aback, and, being slow to answer, the foreman, as if fearing he had been too abrupt, went on to say :

“The reason I asked was because you seem to enjoy so much reading your Bible and saying your prayers that I thought you must have had those good habits a long time.”

Frank had now fully recovered himself, and with a blush that greatly became him, answered modestly :

“I have always loved God. Mother taught me how

good and kind he is as soon as I was old enough to understand, and the older I get the more I want to love him and to try to do what is right."

A look of ineffable tenderness came into Johnston's dark eyes while the boy was speaking. Then his face darkened, and, giving vent to a heavy sigh, he passed his hand over his eyes as though to put away some painful recollection. After a moment's silence, he said:

"My mother loved her Bible and wanted me to love it too. But I was a wild, headstrong chap, and didn't take kindly to the notion of being religious, and I'm afraid I cost her many a tear. God bless her! I wonder does she ever up there think of her son down here, and wonder if he's any better than he was when she had to leave him to look after himself."

Not knowing just what to say, Frank made no reply, but his face glowed with sympathetic interest, and after another pause the foreman went on:

"I've been thinking a great deal lately, Frank, and it's been all your doing. Seeing you so particular about your religion, and not letting anything stop you from saying your prayers and reading your Bible just as you would at home, has made me feel dreadfully ashamed of myself, and I've been wanting to have a talk with you about it. Would you mind reading your Bible to me?"

I haven't been inside a church for many a year, and I guess I'd be none the worse of a little Bible-reading."

Frank could not restrain an exclamation of delight. Would he mind? Had not this very thing been on his conscience for weeks past? Had he not been hoping and praying for a good opportunity to propose it himself, and only kept back because of his fear lest the foreman should think this offer presumptuous?

"I shall be very glad indeed to read my Bible to you, sir," he answered, eagerly. "I've been wanting to ask if I mightn't do it, but was afraid that perhaps you would not like it."

"Well, Frank, to be honest with you, I'd a good deal rather have you read to me than read it for myself," said Johnston; "because you must know it 'most by heart, and I've forgotten what little I did know once."

The reading began that night, and thenceforward was never missed while the two were at Camp Kippewa. Young as Frank was, he had learned from his parents and at the Sunday-school a great deal about the Book of books, and especially about the life of Christ, so that to Johnston he seemed almost a marvel of knowledge. It was beautiful to see the big man's simplicity as he sat at the feet, so to speak, of a mere boy, and learned anew from him the sublime and precious gospel truths that the

indifference and neglect of more than forty years had buried in dim obscurity; and Frank found an ever-increasing pleasure in repeating the comments and explanations that he had heard from the dear lips at home. Even to his young eyes it was clear that the foreman was thoroughly in earnest, and would not stop short of a full surrender of himself to the Master he had so long refused to acknowledge. Above all things, he was a thorough man, and therefore this would take time, for he would insist upon knowing every step of the way; but once well started, no power on earth or beneath would be permitted to bar his progress to the very end.

And this great end was achieved before he left his bunk to resume his work. He lay down there bruised and crippled and godless; but he arose healed and strengthened and a new man in Christ Jesus! If Frank was proud of his big convert, who can blame him? But for his coming to the camp, Johnston might have remained as he was, caring for none of those things which touched his eternal interests; but now through the influence of his example, aided by favoring circumstances, he had been led to the Master's feet.

But Damase—what of Damase? There is not much to tell. Whether or not he was watching when the bridge fell, and how he spent that night, no one ever

knew. The next morning he was seen at the depot, where he explained his presence by saying that the foreman had "bounced" him, and that he was going back to his native town. Beyond this, nothing further was ever heard of him.

CHAPTER X.

A HUNTING-TRIP.

THE hold of winter had begun to relax ere Johnston was able to fully resume his work, and, a good deal of time having been lost through his accident, every effort had to be exerted to make it up ere the warm sunshine should put an end to the winter's work. Frank was looking forward eagerly to the day when they should break camp, for, to tell the truth, he felt that he had had quite enough of it for one season, and he was longing to be back in Calumet and enjoying the comforts of home once more. He was not exactly homesick. You would have very much offended him by hinting at that. He was simply tired of the monotony of camp fare and and camp life, and anxious to return to civilization. So he counted the days that must pass before the order to break camp would come, and felt very light of heart when the sun shone warm and correspondingly downcast when the thermometer sank below zero, as it was still liable to do.

“Striving” was the order of the day at the lumber-camp—that is, the different gangs of choppers and saw-

yers and teamsters vied with each other as to which could chop, saw, and haul the most logs in a day. The amount of work they could accomplish when thus striving might astonish Mr. Gladstone himself, from eighty to one hundred logs felled and trimmed being the day's work of two men. Frank was deeply interested in this competition, and enjoying the fullest confidence of the men, he was unanimously appointed scorer, keeping each gang's "tally" in a book, and reporting the results to the foreman, who heartily encouraged the rivalry among his men; for the harder they worked the better would be the showing for the season, and he was anxious not to lose the reputation he had won of turning out more logs at his shanty than did any other foreman on the Kippewa.

As the weeks passed and March gave way to April, and April drew toward its close, the lumbermen's work grew more and more arduous, but they kept at it bravely until at last, near the end of April, the snow became so soft in the woods and the roads so bad that no more hauling could be done, and the whole attention of the camp was then given to getting the logs, that had been gathering at the riverside all through the winter, out upon the ice, so that they might be sure to be carried off by the spring floods. This work did not require all hands, and Johnston now saw the way clear to giving

Frank a treat that he had long had in mind for him, but had said nothing about. They were having their usual chat together before going to bed, when the foreman said:

“Is there any thing you would like to do before we break up camp?”

Frank did not at first see the drift of the question, and looking at Johnston with a puzzled sort of expression replied, questioningly:

“I don’t know. I’ve had a very good time here.”

“Well, but can you think of any thing you would like to do before you go back to Calumet?” persisted the foreman. “I’m asking you because there’ll not be enough work to go round next week, and you can have a bit of holiday. Now, isn’t there something you would like to have a taste of while you have the chance?” And as he spoke his eyes were directed toward the wall at the head of his bed, where hung his rifle, powder-flask, and hunting knife. Frank caught his meaning at once.

“Oh, I see what you are driving at now!” he exclaimed. “You want to know if I wouldn’t like to go out hunting.”

“Right you are,” said Johnston. “Would you?”

“Would I?” cried Frank. “Would a duck swim? Just try me, that’s all.”

“Well, I do intend to try you,” returned Johnston. “The firm have some limits, over there near the foot of the mountain, that they want me to prospect before I go back, and pick out the best place for a camp. I’ve been trying to make out to go over there all winter, but getting hurt upset my plans, and I’ve not had a chance until now. So I’m thinking of making a start to-morrow. There’s nothing much else to do except to finish getting the logs on the ice, and I can trust the men to see to that, and, no odds what kind of weather we have, the ice can’t start for a week at least. So if you’d like to come along with me and take your rifle, you may get a chance to have a shot at something before we get back. Does that suit you?”

This proposition suited Frank admirably. A week in the woods in Johnston’s company could not fail to be a week of delight, and he thanked the foreman in his warmest words for offering to take him on his prospecting tour.

The following morning they set off, the party consisting of four—namely, the foreman, Frank, Laberge, who accompanied them as cook, and another man named Booth as a sort of assistant. The snow still lay deep enough to render snow shoes necessary, and while Johnston and Frank carried their rifles, Laberge and Booth

drew behind them a toboggan, upon which was packed a small tent and an abundant supply of provisions. Their route led straight into the heart of the vast and so far little-explored forest, and away from the river beside whose bank they had been living all winter. It was Johnston's purpose to penetrate to the foot of the mountain range that rose into sight nearly thirty miles away, and then work backward by a different route, noting carefully the lay of the land, the course of the streams, and the best bunches of timber, so as to make sure of selecting a site for the future camp in the very best locality.

He was evidently in excellent spirits himself at the prospect of a week's holiday, for such it would really be, and, all trace of his injury having entirely disappeared, there was no drawback to the energy with which he led his little expedition into the forest where they would be buried for the rest of the week.

The weather was as fine as heart could wish. All day the sun shone brightly, and even at night the temperature never got anywhere near zero, so that with a buffalo robe under you and a couple of good blankets over you it was possible to sleep quite comfortably in a canvas tent.

"I can't promise you much in the way of game,

Frank," said Johnston, as the two tramped along side by side. "It is too late in the season ; but the bears must be out of their dens by this time, and if we see one we'll do our best to get his skin for you to take home."

The idea of bringing a big bear skin home as a trophy of his first real hunting expedition pleased Frank mightily, and his eyes flashed as he grasped his rifle in a way that would in itself have been sufficient warning to bruin, could he only have seen it, to keep well out of the way of so doughty an assailant.

"I'd like immensely to have a shot at a bear, sir," he replied. "So I do hope we shall see one."

"You must be precious careful, though, Frank," said Johnston, "for they're generally in mighty bad humor at this time of year, and you need to get your work in quick, or they may make short work of you."

Various kinds of game were seen during the next day or two, and Frank had many a shot. But Johnston seldom fired, preferring to let Frank have all the fun, as he said. One afternoon just before they went into camp the keen eyes of Laberge detected something among the branches of a pine a little distance to the right of their path which caused his face to glow with excitement as he pointed eagerly to it, and exclaimed:

"*Voila !* A lucifée—shoot him, quick !"

They all turned in the direction he pointed out, and there, sure enough, was a dark mass in the fork of the tree that, as they hastened toward it, resolved itself into a fierce-looking creature, full four times the size of an ordinary cat, which, instead of showing any fear at their approach, bristled up its back and uttered a deep, angry snarl that spoke volumes for its courage.

"Now, then, Frank," said Johnston, "take first shot and see if you can fetch the brute down."

Trembling with excitement, Frank threw up his rifle, did his best to steady himself, took aim at the bewhiskered muzzle of the lynx, and pulled the trigger. The sharp crack of the rifle was followed by an ear-piercing shriek of mingled pain and rage, and the next instant the wounded creature launched forth into the air toward the hunters. Frank's nervousness, natural enough under the circumstances, had caused him to miss his mark a little, and the bullet, instead of piercing the "lucifée's" brain, had only stung him sorely in the shoulder.

But as quick as was his movements, Johnston was still quicker, and the moment its feet touched the snow, ere it could gather itself for another spring, his rifle cracked and a bullet put an end to its career.

"Just as well you weren't by yourself, Frank; hey?"

said he, with a smile of satisfaction at the accuracy of his shot. "This chap would have been an ugly customer at close quarters, and," turning the body over to find where the first bullet had hit, "you see you hardly winged him."

Frank blushed furiously and looked very much ashamed of himself for not being a better marksman, but the foreman cheered him up by assuring him that he had really done very well in hitting the animal at all at that distance.

"You only want a little practice, my boy," said he. "You have plenty of pluck; there's no mistake about that."

The lynx had a fine skin, which Laberge deftly removed, and it was given to Frank because he had fired the first shot at it, so that he would not go back to Calumet without at least one hunting trophy on the strength of which he might do a little boasting.

Further and further into the forest the little party pierced their way, not following any direct line, but making detours to right and left, in order that the country might be thoroughly inspected. As they neared the mountains the trees diminished in size and the streams shrank until at the end of their journey the first were too small to pay for cutting, and the second too shallow to be

any good for floating. With no little difficulty they ascended a shoulder of the mountain range, in order to get a look over all the adjoining country, and then, Johnston having made up his mind as to the location of the best bunches of timber and most the convenient site for the projected lumber camp, the object of the expedition was accomplished and they were at liberty to return to the shanty. But before they could do this they were destined to have an adventure that came perilously near taking away from them the youngest of their number.

It was the afternoon before they struck camp on the return journey. The foreman was sitting by the tent mending one of his snow shoes, which had been damaged tramping through the bush, Booth was busy cutting firewood, and Laberge making preparations for the evening meal. Having nothing else to do, Frank picked up his rifle and sauntered off toward the mountain side, with no very clear idea as to anything more than to kill a little time. Whistling cheerfully one of the many sacred melodies he knew and loved, he made his way over the snow, being soon lost to sight from the camp, Johnston calling after him just before he disappeared:

“Take care of yourself, my boy, and don’t go too far.”

To which Frank responded with a smiling, “All right, sir.”

At the distance of about a quarter of a mile from the camp he noticed a sort of rift in the mountain, where the rocks were bare and exposed, and at the end of this rift a dark aperture was visible, which at once attracted his attention.

The boy that could come across a cave without being filled with a burning curiosity to take a peep in and, if possible, explore its interior would have to be a very dull fellow, and Frank certainly was not of that kind. This dark aperture was no doubt the mouth of a cave of some sort, and he determined to inspect it. When he got within about fifteen yards, he noticed what he had not seen before, that there was a well-defined track leading from the cave to the underbrush to the right, which had evidently been made by some large animal, and with somewhat of a start Frank immediately thought of a bear.

Now, of course, under the circumstances, there was but one thing for him to do if he wished to illustrate his common sense, and that was to hurry back to the tent as fast as possible for re-enforcements. Ordinarily, he would have done so at once, but this time he was still smarting a bit at his poor markmanship in the case of the "lucifée," and the sight of the track in the snow suggested the idea of winning a reputation for himself by

killing a bear without any assistance from the others. It was a rash and foolish notion, but then boys will be boys.

Moving forward cautiously, he approached within ten yards of the cave and then halted again, bringing his rifle forward so as to be ready to fire at a moment's notice. Bending down until his eyes were on a level with the opening, he tried hard to peer into its depths, but the darkness was too deep to pierce, and he could not make out anything. Then he bethought him of another expedient. Picking up a lump of snow, he pressed it into a ball and threw it into the cave, at the same time shouting out:

"Halloo there! Anybody inside?" A proceeding that capped the climax of his rashness and produced quite as sensational a result as he could possibly have desired, for the next moment a deep angry roar issued from the rocky retreat and a fiery pair of eyes gleamed out from its shadows. The critical moment had come, and, taking him a little below the shining orbs, so to make sure of hitting, Frank pulled the trigger. The report of the rifle and the roar of the bear followed close upon one another, awaking the echoes of the adjoining heights, and then came a moment's silence, broken the next instant by a cry of alarm from Frank, for the bear,

instead of writhing in the agonies of death, was charging down upon him with open mouth! Once more he had missed his mark and only wounded when he should have killed.

There was but one thing for him to do—to flee for his life. And, uttering a shout of “Help! help!” with all the strength of his lungs, he threw down his rifle and started for the tent at the top of his speed.

It was well for him that the snow still lay deep upon the ground and that he was so expert in the use of his snow shoes, for while the bear wallowed heavily in the drifts he flew lightly over them, so that for a time the furious creature lost ground rather than gained upon him. For a hundred yards the boy and bear raced through the forest, Frank continuing his cries for help while he ran. Looking back for an instant, he saw that the bear had not yet drawn any nearer, and, terrified as he was, the thought flashed into his mind that if the brute followed him all the way to the camp he would soon be dispatched by the men, and then he, Frank, would be entitled to some credit for thus bringing him to execution.

On sped the two in their race for life, the boy skimming swiftly over the soft snow, the bear plowing his way madly through it until more than half the distance to

the camp had been accomplished. If Johnston had heard the report of the rifle and Frank's wild cries for help, he should be coming into sight now, and with intense anxiety Frank looked ahead in hopes of seeing him emerge from the trees which clustered thickly in that direction. But there was no sign of him yet, and, shouting again as loudly as he could, the boy pressed strenuously forward. There was greater need for exertion than ever, for he had reached a spot where the snow was not very deep and had been firmly packed by the wind, so that the bear's broad feet sank but little in it, and his rate of speed ominously increased. So close was the fierce creature coming that Frank could hear his paws pattering on the snow and his deep panting breath.

Oh, why did not Johnston appear? Surely he must have heard Frank's cries. Ah, there he was, just bursting through the trees into the opening with Laberge and Booth close at his heels. Frank's heart bounded with joy, and he was tempted to take a glance back to see how close the bear had got. It was not a wise thing to do, and he came near paying dearly for doing it, for at the same instant his snow shoes caught in each other, and before he could recover himself he fell headlong in the snow with the bear right upon him.

CHAPTER XI.

THE GREAT SPRING DRIVE.

AT the sight of Frank's fall the three men gave a simultaneous shout of alarm that caused the bear to halt, for a moment, in his fierce pursuit, and lifting his head to look angrily in the direction from which the sound had come. This action saved the helpless boy—striving to regain his feet only a yard or two in front of him—from serious injury if not from death. The instant the creature's broad breast was exposed, Johnston threw his rifle to his shoulder, and without waiting to take aim, but ejaculating a fervent "Help me, O God!" pulled the trigger. The report of the rifle rang out sharp and clear, the heavy bullet sped through the air straight to its mark, and with it embedded in his heart the mighty animal, leaving untouched the boy at his feet, made a mad bound across his body to reach the assailant who had given him his death wound.

But it was a vain though gallant attempt. Ere he was half-way to the foreman, he staggered and rolled over upon the snow, and before he could lift himself again the men were upon him, and Laberge, swinging his keen ax

high in the air, brought it down with a mighty blow upon the brute's slanting forehead, letting daylight into his brain. Not even a bear could survive such a stroke, and without a struggle the creature yielded up its life. Instantly the foreman sprang to Frank's side and lifted him upon his feet.

"My dear boy," he cried, his face aflame with anxious love, as he clasped Frank passionately in his arms, "are you hurt at all? Did he touch you?"

What between his previous exertions and the big man's mighty embrace, poor Frank had hardly enough breath left in him to reply, but he managed to gasp out:

"Not a bit. He never touched me."

"Are you quite sure now?" persisted Johnston, whose anxiety could not be at once relieved. "Oh, my lad! my heart stood still when you fell down right in front of the brute."

"I'm quite sure, Mr. Johnston," said Frank. "See!" And to prove his words he gave a jump into the air, threw up his arms, and shouted, "Hip! hip! hurrah!" with the full force of his lungs.

"God be praised!" exclaimed the foreman. "What a wonderful escape! Let us kneel down right here, and give him thanks," he added, suiting his action to his words. Frank at once followed his example. So too did

Laberge and Booth, and there in the midst of the forest wilds, this strange praise-meeting was held over the body of the fierce creature from whose murderous rage Frank had been so happily delivered.

Johnston sent Laberge back to the tent for the toboggan, and before darkness set in the bear was dragged thither, where the two men skillfully skinned him by the light of the camp fire, and stretched the pelt out to dry.

The quartette had a long talk over the whole affair after supper had been disposed of. Frank was plied with questions which he took much pleasure in answering, for naturally enough he felt himself to be in some measure the hero of the occasion. While he could not help admiring and cordially praising Frank's audacity, the foreman felt bound to reprove him for it, and to impress upon him the necessity of showing more caution in future, or he might get himself into a situation of danger from which there might be no one at hand to deliver him. Frank, by this time thoroughly sobered down, listened dutifully, and readily promised to be more careful if he ever came across bear tracks again.

"Anyway, my boy," said Johnston, "you won't go home empty-handed; and when your mother sees those two skins, which are both pretty good ones, she'll think more of you than she ever did before."

"Yes, but you know," said Frank, "both skins oughtn't to be mine, for I didn't kill either of the animals."

"Neither you did, Frank," replied Johnston, "but you came mighty near killing the one, and the other came mighty near killing you; so I think it's only fair you should have both. Don't you think so, mates?" turning to the men.

"Ah, *oui*," exclaimed Laberge, with a vigorous nod of his head.

"Of course," added Booth, no less emphatically, and so the matter was settled very much to Frank's satisfaction.

The next day the tent was packed and the little party set out for the shanty, which was reached in good time without anything eventful occurring on the way. They found the work of getting the logs down upon the ice well-nigh completed, and the foreman's return, giving an impetus to the men's exertions, it was finished in a few days more, and then there was nothing to do but to await the breaking up of the ice.

They were not kept long in expectancy. The sun was now in full vigor; before his burning rays the snow and ice fled in utter rout; and the frost king, confessing defeat, withdrew his grasp from the Kippewa, which, as if rejoicing in its release, went rippling and bounding merrily on toward the great river beyond, bearing upon its bosom

the many thousand logs which represented the hard labor of Camp Kippewa during the long cold winter months that were now past and gone. The most arduous and exciting phase of the lumberman's life had begun, the great spring drive, as they call it, and for weeks to come he would be engaged playing the part of shepherd after a strange fashion, with huge, clumsy, unruly logs for his flock, and the rushing river for the highway, along which they should be driven.

The shantymen were divided into two parties, one section taking the teams and camp-belongings back to the depot, the other and much larger section following the logs in their journey to the mills. Johnston put himself at the head of the latter, and Frank, of course, accompanied him, for the foreman was no less anxious to have him than the boy was to go. The bonds of affection that bound the two were growing stronger every day they were together. Frank regarded Johnston as the preserver of his life, and Johnston, on his part, looked upon Frank as having been in God's hands the means of bringing light and joy to his soul. It might be said, without exaggeration, that either of them would risk his life in the other's behalf with the utmost willingness.

The journey down the river had to be done in light marching order. Not much baggage could be carried so

as not to burthen too heavily the three or four "*bonnes*," as they call the long, light, flat-bottomed boats, peculiar to lumbermen, which had been all winter awaiting the time when their services would be required. The shore work being beyond his strength, Frank was given a place in one of the *bonnes* along with Baptiste, Laberge, and part of the commissariat, and it was their duty to precede the main body of the men, and have their dinner and supper ready for them when they came up. In this way Frank would get a perfect view of the whole business of river driving, and he was in high feather as they made a start on a beautiful morning in early May, with the sun shining brightly, the air soft and balmy, and the river reflecting the blue of the unclouded heavens.

"Now take good care of Baptiste and the grub," said Johnston, with a smile, as he pushed the boat in which Frank was sitting off into the stream. "If you let anything happen to them, Frank, I don't know what we'll do to you."

"I'll do my best, sir," replied Frank, smiling back. "The boat won't upset if I can help it, and as Baptiste can't swim, he'll do his best to be careful too; won't you, Baptiste?"

"*Vraiment, mon cher*," cried Baptiste. "If we upset—poor Baptiste! zat will be the last of him." And he

shrugged his fat shoulders and made a serio-comic grimace that set everybody laughing.

If the Kippewa, through all its course, had been as deep and free from obstructions as it was opposite the lumber camp, the river drivers would have had an easy time of it, getting their wooden flock to market. But none of the rivers in this part of the country go quietly on their way from source to outlet. Falls and rapids are of frequent occurrence, and it is these which add difficulty and danger to the lumberman's work. Carrying pike poles and cant hooks, the former being simply long tough ash poles with a sharp spike on the business end, and the latter shorter stouter poles, something like the handle of a shovel, with a curious curved iron attachment that took a firm grip of a log and enabled the worker to roll its lazy bulk over and over in the direction he desired, with these weapons taking the place of the ax and saw, the men set off on their journey down the river side, two of the boats going ahead, and two bringing up the rear.

Frank felt in great spirits. He was thoroughly expert in the management of a *bonne*, and the voyage down the river in this lovely spring weather could be only continued enjoyment, especially as beyond steering the boat he had nothing to do, and it would be practically one long holiday. There were nearly twenty thousand logs to be

guided, coaxed, rolled, and shoved for one hundred miles or more through sullen pools, sleeping reaches, turbulent rapids, and roaring falls, where, as if they were living things, they would seem to exhaust every possible means of delay. The way in which they would stick at some critical point and pile one upon another, until the whole river was blocked, defies description; and one seeing the spectacle for the first time might well be pardoned, if he were to be positive that there could be no way of bringing order out of so hopeless a confusion, and releasing the tangled obstructed mass.

For the first few days matters went very smoothly, the river being deep and swift and the logs giving little trouble. Of course, numbers of them were continually stranding on the banks, but the watchful drivers soon spied them out, and with a push of the pike pole, or drag of the cant hook, sent them floating off again on their journey. At mid-day all the men would gather about Baptiste's kettles and dispose of a hearty dinner, and then again at night they would leave the logs to look after themselves while they ate their supper and talked, and then lay down to rest their weary bodies. But this condition of things was too good to last. In due time the difficulties began to show themselves, and then Frank saw the most exciting and dangerous phase of a

lumberman's life—a part of it with which when he grew older he must himself become familiar if he would be master of the whole business, as it was his ambition to be.

The great army of logs, forging onward slowly or swiftly, according to the force of the current, would come to a point where the stream narrowed and jagged rocks thrust their unwelcome heads above the surface. The vanguard of the army, perhaps, passing either to right or left of the rocks, would go on its way unchecked. But when the main body came up, and the whole stream was full of dripping logs, some clumsy tree trunk going down broadside first would bring up short against the rock. As quickly as a crowd will gather in a city street, the other logs would cluster about the one that obstructed their passage. There would be no stopping the on-rush. In less time than it takes to describe it, a hundred logs would be jostling one another in the current, and every minute the confusion would increase, until ere long the disordered mass would stretch from shore to shore, the whole stream would be blocked up, and the event most dreaded by the river driver would have taken place: to wit, a log jam.

The worst place that Johnston had to encounter in getting his drive of logs to the river was at the Black Rapids, and never will Frank forget the thrilling excite-

ment of that experience. These rapids were the terror of the Kippewa lumbermen. They were situated in the swiftest part of the river, and if Nature had in cold blood tried her utmost to give the despoilers of her forest a hard nut to crack she could scarcely have succeeded better. The boiling current was divided into two portions by a jagged spur of rock that thrust itself above the surging waters, and so sure as a log came broadside against this projection it was caught and held in a firm embrace.

Johnston thoroughly understood this, and had taken every care to prevent a jam occurring, and if it had been possible for him to do what was in his mind—namely, to land upon the troublesome rock, and with his pike pole push back again into the current every log that threatened to stick—the whole drive would have slipped safely by. He did make a gallant attempt to carry this out, putting four of the best oarsmen into Frank's boat, and trying again and again to force his way through the fierce current to the rock, while Frank watched him with breathless interest from the bank. But, strain and tug as the oarsmen might, the eddying, whirling stream was too strong for them, and swept them past the rock again and again until at length the foreman had to give up his design as impracticable.

It was exciting work, and Frank longed very much to be in the boat, but Johnston, indulgent as he was toward his favorite, refused him this time.

"No, no, Frank; I couldn't think of it," he said, decidedly. "It's too risky a business. The *bonne* might be smashed any time, and if it did we'd run a poor chance of getting out of these rapids. More than one good man has gone to his death here."

"Have there been men killed in these rapids?" Frank asked, with a look of profound concern at his big friend, who was taking such risks. "The poor fellows! What a dreadful death! They must have been dashed against the rocks. Surely, you won't try it again, will you?" For it was dinner time, and all hands were taking a welcome rest before resuming the toils of the day.

Johnston thoroughly understood and appreciated the boy's anxiety in his behalf, and there was a look of wonderful tenderness in his eyes as he answered him :

"I must try it once more, Frank; for if I can only get out to that rock there'll be no jam this day. But don't you worry. I've taken bigger risks and come out all right."

So he made one more attempt, while Frank watched every movement of the boat, praying earnestly for its preservation. Again he failed, and the *bonne* returned

to the bank unharmed. But hardly had the weary men thrown themselves down for a brief spell of rest than what they all so dreaded happened. One of the logs, getting into a cross eddy, rolled broadside against the rock. It was caught and held fast. Another and another charged against it and stayed there. The main body of the drive was now passing down, and every moment the jam increased in size. Soon it would fill the whole stream. Yet the lumbermen were powerless to prevent its growth. They could do nothing until it had so checked the current that it would be possible to make a way over to its center.

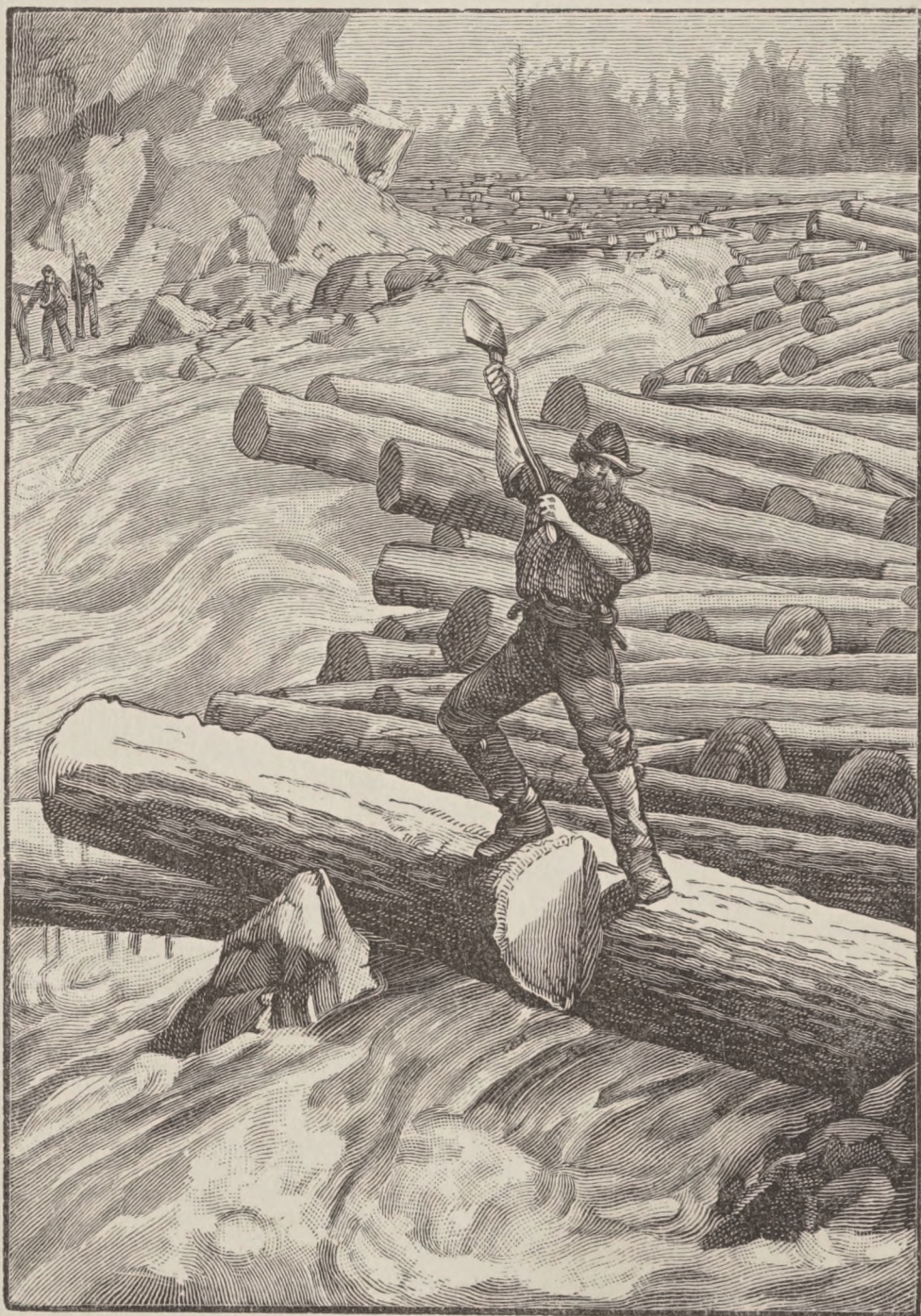
So soon as this took place Johnston, accompanied by three of his best men, armed with axes and cant hooks, leaping from log to log with the sure agility only lumbermen could show, succeeded in reaching the heart of the jam, and at once proceeded to attack it with tremendous energy. One log after another was detached from the disordered mass and sent whirling off down stream, until at the end of an hour's arduous exertion the keypiece—that is, the log that had caused all the trouble—was found.

“Now, my boys,” said Johnston to his men, “get ashore as quick as you can. I’ll stay and cut out the keypiece.”

The men demurred for a moment. They were reluctant to leave their chief alone in a position of such extreme peril. But he commanded them to go.

"There's only one man wanted," he said, "and I'll do it myself. It's no use you risking your lives too."

So the men obeyed, and returned to the bank to join the group watching Johnston's movements with intense anxiety. They all knew as well as he did the exceeding peril of his position, and not one of them would breathe freely until he had accomplished his task, and found his way safely back to the shore.



The Chore Boy of Camp Kippewa.

CHAPTER XII.

HOME AGAIN.

FOR so large a man the foreman showed an agility that was really wonderful, as he leaped from log to log with the swiftness and sureness of a chamois. He had been lumbering all his life, and there was nothing that fell to the lumberman's experience with which he was not perfectly familiar. Yet it is doubtful if he ever had a more difficult or dangerous task than that before him now. The "keypiece" of the jam was fully exposed, and, once it was cut in two, it would no longer hold the accumulation of logs together. They would be released from their bondage, and, springing forward with the full force of the pent-up current, would rush madly down stream, carrying everything before them.

But what would Johnston do in the midst of this tumult? A few more moments would tell; for his ax was dealing tremendous strokes before which the keypiece, stout though it was, must soon yield. Ah, it is almost severed. The foreman pauses for an instant and glances keenly around, evidently in order to see what will be his best course of action when the jam breaks. Frank, in

an agony of apprehension and anxiety, has sunk to his knees, his lips moving in earnest prayer, while his eyes are fixed on his beloved friend. Johnston's quick glance falls upon him, and, catching the significance of his attitude, his face is irradiated with a heavenly light of love as he calls out, across the boiling current:

"God bless you, Frank! Keep praying."

Then he returns to his work. The keen ax flashes through the air in stroke after stroke. At length there comes a sound that cannot be mistaken. The foreman throws aside his ax and prepares to jump for life; and, like one man, the breathless onlookers shout together as the keypiece rends in two, and the huge jam, suddenly released, bursts away from the rock and charges tumultuously down the river!

If ever man needed the power of prompt decision, it was the foreman then. To the men on shore there seemed no possible way of escape from the avalanche of logs; and Frank shut his eyes lest he should have to witness a dreadful tragedy. A cry from the men caused him to open them again quickly; and when he looked at the rock it was untenanted—Johnston had disappeared! Speechless with dread, he turned to the man nearest him, his blanched countenance expressing the inquiry he could not utter.

"He's there," cried the man, pointing to the whirl of water behind the body of logs. "He dived."

And so it was. Recognizing that to remain in the way of the jam was to court certain death, the foreman chose the desperate alternative of diving beneath the logs, and allowing them to pass over him before he rose to the surface. Great was the relief of Frank and the others when, amid the foaming water, Johnston's head appeared and he struck out to keep himself afloat. But it was evident that he had little strength left, and was quite unable to contend with the mighty current. Good swimmer as he was, the danger of drowning threatened him.

Frank's quick eyes noticed this, and like a flash the fearless boy, not stopping to call any of the others to his aid, bounded down the bank to where the *bonne* lay upon the shore, shoved her off into deep water, springing in over the bow as she slipped away, and in another moment was whirling down the river, crying out at the top of his voice :

"I'm coming. I'll save you. Keep up."

His eager shouts reached Johnston's ears, and the sight of the boat, pitching and tossing as the current swept it toward him, inspired him to renewed exertion. He struggled to get in the way of the boat, and succeeded so well that Frank, leaning over the side as far as he dared, was

able to seize his outstretched hand and hold it until he could grasp the gunwale himself with a grip that no current could loosen. A glad shout of relief went up from the men at sight of this, and Frank, having made sure that the foreman was now out of danger, seized the oars and began to ply them vigorously with the purpose of beaching the *bonne* at the first opportunity. They had to go some distance before this could be done, but Johnston held on firmly, and presently a projecting point was reached against which Frank steered the boat; and the moment she was aground, he hastened to the stern and helped the foreman ashore, the latter having just strength enough left to drag himself out of the water, and fall in a limp, dripping heap, upon the ground.

“God bless you, Frank dear,” he said, as soon as he recovered his breath. “You’ve saved my life again. I never could have got ashore if you hadn’t come after me. One of the logs must have hit me on the head when I was diving; for I felt so faint and dizzy when I came up that I thought it was all over with me. But, thank God, I’m a live man still; and I’m sure it’s not for nothing that I’ve been spared.”

The men all thought it a plucky act on Frank’s part to go off alone in the boat to the foreman’s rescue, and showered unstinted praise upon him, all of which he took

very quietly ; for, indeed, he felt quite sufficiently rewarded in that his venture was crowned with success. The exciting incident, of course, threw everybody out in their work ; and when they returned to it they found that the logs had taken advantage of their being left uncared for to play all sorts of queer pranks, and run themselves aground in every conceivable fashion.

But the river drivers did not mind this very much. The hated Black Rapids were passed, and the rest of the Kippewa was comparatively smooth sailing. So, with song and joke, they toiled away until all their charges were afloat again and gliding steadily onward toward their goal. Thenceforward they had little interruption in their course ; and Frank found the life wonderfully pleasant, drifting idly all day long in the *bonne*, and camping at night beside the river, the weather being bright and warm, and delightful all the time.

So soon as the Kippewa rolled its burden of forest spoils out upon the broad bosom of the Ottawa,—the Grand River, as those who live beside its banks love to call it,—the work of the river drivers was over. The logs that had caused them so much trouble were now handed over to the care of a company which gathered them up into “tows,” and with powerful steamers dragged them down the river until the sorting grounds were reached, where

they were turned into the "booms" to await their time for execution—in other words, their sawing up.

Frank felt really sorry when the driving was over. He loved the water, and would have been glad to spend the whole summer upon it. He was telling Johnston this as they were talking together on the evening of the last day upon the Kippewa. Johnston had been saying to him how glad he must be that the work was all over, and that they now could go over to the nearest village and take the stage for home. But Frank did not entirely agree with him.

"I'm not anxious to go home by stage," said he. "I'd a good deal rather stick to the river. I think it's just splendid, so long as the weather's fine."

"Why, what a water dog you are, Frank!" said the foreman, laughing. "One would think you'd have had enough of the water by this time."

"Not a bit of it," said Frank, returning the smile. "The woods in winter, and the water in summer—that's what I enjoy."

"Well, but aren't you in a hurry to get home and see your mother again?" queried Johnston.

"Of course I am," answered Frank. "But, you see, a day or two won't make much difference, for she doesn't know just when to look for me; and I've never been

on this part of the Ottawa, and want to see it ever so much."

"Well—let me see," reflected Johnston. "How can we manage it? You'd soon get sick of the steamers. They're mortal slow and very dirty. Besides, they don't encourage passengers, or they'd have too many of them. But hold on!" he exclaimed, his face lighting up with a new idea. "I've got it. How would you like to finish the rest of the trip home on a square timber raft? There'll be one passing any day, and I know 'most all the men in the business; so there'll be no difficulty about getting a passage."

"The very idea!" cried Frank, jumping up and bringing his hand down upon his thigh with a resounding slap. "Nothing would please me better. Oh, what fun it will be shooting the slides!" And he danced about in delight at the prospect.

"All right, then, my lad," said Johnston, smiling at the boy's exuberance. "We'll just wait here until a raft comes along, and then we'll board her and ask the fellows to let us go down with them. They won't refuse."

They had not long to wait; for the very next day a huge raft hove in sight—a real floating island of mighty timbers—and, on going out to it, in the *bonne*, Johnston was glad to find that the foreman in charge was an old friend

who would be heartily pleased at having his company for the rest of the voyage. So he and Frank brought their scanty baggage on board and joined themselves to the crew of men that, with the aid of a towing steamer, were navigating this very strange kind of craft down the river.

This was an altogether novel experience for Frank, and he found it much to his liking. The raft was an immense one.

“As fine a lot of square timber as I ever took down,” said its captain, proudly. “It’s worth forty thousand dollars, if it’s worth a cent.”

Forty thousand dollars! Frank’s eyes opened wide at the mention of this vast sum, and he wondered to himself if he should ever be the owner of such a valuable piece of property. Although he had begun as a chore-boy, his ambition was by no means limited to his becoming in due time a foreman like Johnston, or even an overseer like Alec Stewart. He allowed his imagination to carry him forward to a day of still greater things, when he should be his own master, and have foremen and overseers under him. This slow sailing down the river was very favorable to day dreaming, and Frank could indulge himself to his heart’s content during the long lovely spring days. There were more than two-

score men upon the raft. the majority of them *habitants* and half-breeds, and they were as full of songs as robins; especially in the evening, after supper, when they would gather about the great fire, always burning on its clay bed in the centre of the raft, and with solo and chorus awake the echoes of the placid river.

In common with the rivers which pour into it, the Ottawa is broken by many falls and rapids, and to have attempted to run the huge raft over one of these would have insured its complete destruction. But this difficulty is duly provided for. At one side of the fall a "slide" is built—that is, a contrivance something like a canal, with sides and bottom of heavy timber, and having a steep slope down which the water rushes in frantic haste to the level below. Now the raft is not put together in one piece, but is made up of a number of "cribs"—a crib being a small raft containing fifteen to twenty timbers, and being about twenty-four feet wide by thirty feet in length. At the head of the slide the big raft is separated into the cribs, and these cribs make the descent one at a time, each having three or four men on board.

Shooting the slides, as it is called, is a most delightful amusement to people whose nerves don't bother them. Frank had heard so much about it that he was looking forward to it from the time he boarded the raft, and now

at Des Joachim Falls he was to have the realization. He went down in one of the first cribs, and this is the way he described the experience to his mother :

“But, mother, the best fun of the whole thing is shooting the slides. I just wish there was a slide near Calumet, so that I could take you down and let you see how splendid it is. Why, it’s just like—let me see—I’ve got it! It’s just like tobogganing on water. You jump on board the crib at the mouth of the slide, you know, and it moves along very slow at first—until it gets to the edge of the first slant ; then it takes a sudden start and away it goes scooting down like greased lightning, making the water fly up all around you, just like the snow does when you’re tobogganing. Oh, but if it isn’t grand ! The timbers of the crib rub against the bottom of the slide and groan and creak as if it hurt them ; and then, besides coming in over the bow, the water spurts up between the timbers, so that you have to look spry or you’re bound to get soaking wet. I got drenched nearly every time ; but that didn’t matter, for the sun soon made me dry again, and it was too good fun to mind a little wetting.”

Frank felt quite sorry when the last of the slides was passed, and wished there were twice as many on the route of the raft. But presently he had something else to

occupy his thoughts, for each day brought him nearer to Calumet, and soon his journeyings by land and water would be ended, and he would be at home again to make his mother's heart glad.

It was the perfection of a spring day when the raft, moving in its leisurely fashion—for was not the whole summer before it?—reached Calumet, and Mrs. Kingston, sitting alone in her cottage, and wondering when her boy would make his appearance, was surprised by an uncere- monious opening of the front door, a quick step in the hall, and a sudden enfolding by two stout arms, while a voice that she had not heard for months shouted in joyous accents :

“Here I am, mother darling, safe and sound, right side up with care, and oh, so glad to be at home again!”

Mrs. Kingston returned the fond embrace with interest, and then held Frank off at arms'-length to see how much he had changed during his six months' absence. She found him both taller and stouter, and with his face well browned by the exposure to the bright spring sunshine.

“You went away a boy, and you've come back almost a man, Frank,” she said, her eyes brimming with tears of joy. “But you're my own boy the same as ever; aren't you, darling?”

It was many a day before Frank reached the end of

his story of life at the lumber camp, for Mrs. Kingston never wearied of hearing all about it. When she learned of his different escapes from danger, the inclination of her heart was to beseech him to be content with one winter in the woods, and to take up some other occupation. But she wisely said nothing, for there could be no doubt as to the direction in which Frank's heart inclined, and she determined not to interfere.

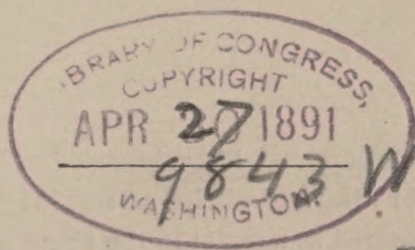
When in the following autumn Frank went back to the forest, he was again under Johnston's command, but not as chore-boy. He was appointed clerk and checker, with liberty to do as much chopping or other work as he pleased. Whatever his duty was he did it, with all his might, doing it heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men, so that he found increasing favor in his employer's eyes, rising steadily higher and higher until, while still a young man, he was admitted into partnership and had the sweet satisfaction of realizing the day dreams of that first trip down the Ottawa on a timber raft.

Yet he never forgot what he had learned when chore-boy of Camp Kippewa, and out of that experience grew a practical philanthropic interest in the well-being and advancement of his employees, that made him the most popular and respected "lumber-king" on the river.

THE END.

THE
WRECKERS OF SABLE ISLAND.

BY
J. MACDONALD OXLEY.



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J. MACDONALD OXLEY.

Marine Department, Ottawa, Canada.

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THE WRECKERS OF SABLE ISLAND.

CHAPTER I.

THE SETTING FORTH.

A VOYAGE across the Atlantic Ocean in the year 1799 was not the every-day affair that it has come to be in the year 1889. There were no "ocean greyhounds" then. The passage was a long and trying one in the clumsy craft of those days, and people looked upon it as a more serious affair than they now do on a tour around the world.

In the year 1799 few people thought of traveling for mere pleasure. North, South, East, and West, the men went on missions of discovery, of conquest, or of commerce; but the women or children abode at home, save, of course, when they ventured out to seek new homes in that new world which was drawing so many to its shores.

It was, therefore, not to be wondered at that the notion of Eric Copeland going out to his father in far-away Nova Scotia should form the subject of more than one family

council at Okadene Manor, the beautiful country-seat of the Copeland family, situated in one of the prettiest parts of Warwickshire, England.

Eric was the only son of Doctor Copeland, surgeon-in-chief of the Seventh Fusiliers, the favorite regiment of the Duke of Kent, the father of the present Queen of England. This regiment formed part of the garrison at Halifax, then under the command of the Royal Duke himself, and the doctor had written to say that if the squire, Eric's grandfather, approved, he would like Eric to come out to him, as his term of service had been extended three years beyond what he expected, and he wanted to have his boy with him. At the same time, he left the matter entirely in the squire's hands for him to decide.

So far as the old gentleman was concerned, he decided at once.

"Send the boy out there to that wild place, and have him scalped by an Indian, or gobbled by a bear before he's there a month? Not a bit of it. I won't hear of it. He's a hundred times better off here."

The squire, be it observed, held very vague notions about Nova Scotia, and indeed the American continent generally, in spite of his son's endeavors to enlighten him. He still firmly believed that there were as many

wigwams as houses in New York, and that Indians in full war-paint and plumes were every day seen on the streets of Philadelphia; while as for poor little Nova Scotia, it was more than his mind could take in how the Duke of Kent could ever bring himself to spend a week in such an outlandish place, not to speak of a number of years.

So soon as Eric learned of his father's request, he was not less quick in coming to a conclusion, but it was of a precisely opposite kind to the squire's. He was what the Irish would call "a broth of a boy." Fifteen last birthday, five feet six inches in height, broad of shoulder and stout of limb, yet perfectly proportioned, as nimble on his feet as a squirrel, and as quick of eye as a king-bird, entirely free from any trace of nervousness or timidity, good-looking in that sense of the word which means more than merely handsome, courteous in his manners, and quite up to the mark in his books, Eric represented the best type of British boy as he looked about him with his brave brown eyes, and longed to be something more than simply a school-boy, and to see a little of that great world up and down which his father had been traveling ever since he could remember.

"Of course I want to go to father," said he, promptly and decidedly. "I don't believe there are any bears or

Indians at Halifax ; and even if there should be, I don't care. I'm not afraid of them."

He had not the look of a boy that could be easily frightened, or turned aside from anything upon which he had set his heart, and the old squire felt as though he were seeing a youthful reflection of himself in the sturdy spirit of resolution shown by his grandson.

"But, Eric, lad," he began to argue, "whether the Indians and bears are plentiful or not, I don't see why you want to leave Oakdene, and go away out to a wild place that is only fit for soldiers. You're quite happy with us here, aren't you?" And the old gentleman's face took on rather a reproachful expression as he put the question.

Eric's face flushed crimson, and crossing over to where the squire sat, he bent down and kissed his wrinkled forehead tenderly.

"I am quite happy, grandpa. You and grandma do so much for me that it would be strange if I wasn't ; but you know I have been more with you than I have with my own father, and now when he wants me to go out to him, I want to go too. You can't blame me, can you?"

What Eric said was true enough. The doctor's regiment had somehow come on for more than its share of foreign service. It had carried its colors with credit over

the burning plains of India, upon the battle-fields of the Continent, and then, crossing to America, had taken its part, however ineffectually, in the struggle which ended so happily in the birth of a new nation. During all of his years Eric had remained at Oakdene, seeing nothing of his father, save when he came to them on leave for a few months at a time.

These home-comings of the doctor were the great events in Eric's life. Nothing was allowed to interfere with his enjoyment of his father's society. All studies were laid aside, and one day of happiness followed another, as together they rode to hounds, whipped the trout-streams, shot over the coverts where pheasants were in plenty, or went on delightful excursions to lovely places round about the neighborhood.

Dr. Copeland enjoyed his release from the routine of military duty quite as much as Eric did his freedom from school, and it would not have been easy to say which of the two went in more heartily for a good time.

It was just a year since the doctor had last been home on leave, and a year seems a very long time to a boy of fifteen, so that when the letter came proposing that Eric should go out to his father (it should have been told before that his mother was dead, having been taken away from him when he was a very little fellow), and spend

three long years with him without a break, if the doctor had been in Kamtchatka or Terra del Fuego instead of simply in Nova Scotia, Eric would not have hesitated a moment, but have jumped at the offer.

The old squire was very loth to part with his grandson, and it was because he knew it would be so that the doctor had not positively asked for Eric to be sent out, but had left the question to be decided by the squire.

Perhaps Eric might have failed to carry his point but for the help given him by Major Maunsell, a brother-officer of Doctor Copeland's, who had been home on leave, and in whose charge Eric was to be placed if it was decided to let him go.

The major had come to spend a day or two at Oakdene a little while before taking his leave of England, and of course the question of Eric's returning to Nova Scotia with him came up for discussion. Eric pleaded his case very earnestly :

"Now please listen to me a moment," said he, taking advantage of a pause in the conversation. "I love you, grandpa and grandma, very dearly, and am very happy with you here, but I love my father too, and I never see him, except just for a little while, when he comes home on leave, and it would be lovely to be with him all the time for three whole years.

Besides that, I do want to see America, and this is such a good chance! I am nearly sixteen, now, and by the time father gets back I'll have to be going to college, and then, you know, he says he's going to leave the army and settle down here, so that dear knows when I can ever get the chance to go again. Oh! please let me go, grandpa, won't you?"

Major Maunsell's eyes glistened as he looked at Eric and listened to him. He was an old bachelor himself, and he could not help envying Doctor Copeland for his handsome, manly son. At once he entered into full sympathy with him in his great desire, and determined to use all his influence in supporting him.

"There's a great deal of sense in what the boy says," he remarked. "It is such a chance as he may not get again in a hurry. There's nothing to harm him out in Halifax, and his father is longing to have him, for he's always talking to me about him, and reading me bits out of his letters."

So the end of it was that the major and Eric between them won the day, and after taking the night to think over it, the good old squire announced the next morning at breakfast that he would make no further objections, and that Eric might go.

The troop-ship, on which Major Maunsell was going,

would sail in a week, so there was no time to be lost in getting Eric ready for the voyage, and for the long sojourn in the distant colony. Many were the trunks of clothing, books, and other things that had to be packed with greatest care, and their number would have been doubled if the major had not protested against taking the jams, jellies, pickles, medicines, and other domestic comforts that the loving old couple wanted Eric to take with him, because they felt sure he could get nothing so good out in Halifax.

All too quickly for them the day came when they were to say "Good-bye" to their grandson, and the parting was a very tearful and trying one. Full of joy as Eric felt, he could not keep back the tears when his white-haired grandmother hugged him again and again to her heart, exclaiming fervently:

"God bless and keep my boy! May his Almighty arms be underneath and round about you, my darling. Put your trust in him, Eric, no matter what may happen."

And the bluff old squire himself was suspiciously moist about the eyes as the carriage drove away, and Eric was really off to Chatham in charge of Major Maunsell, with whom he had by this time got to be on the best of terms.

At Chatham they found their ship in the final stage of

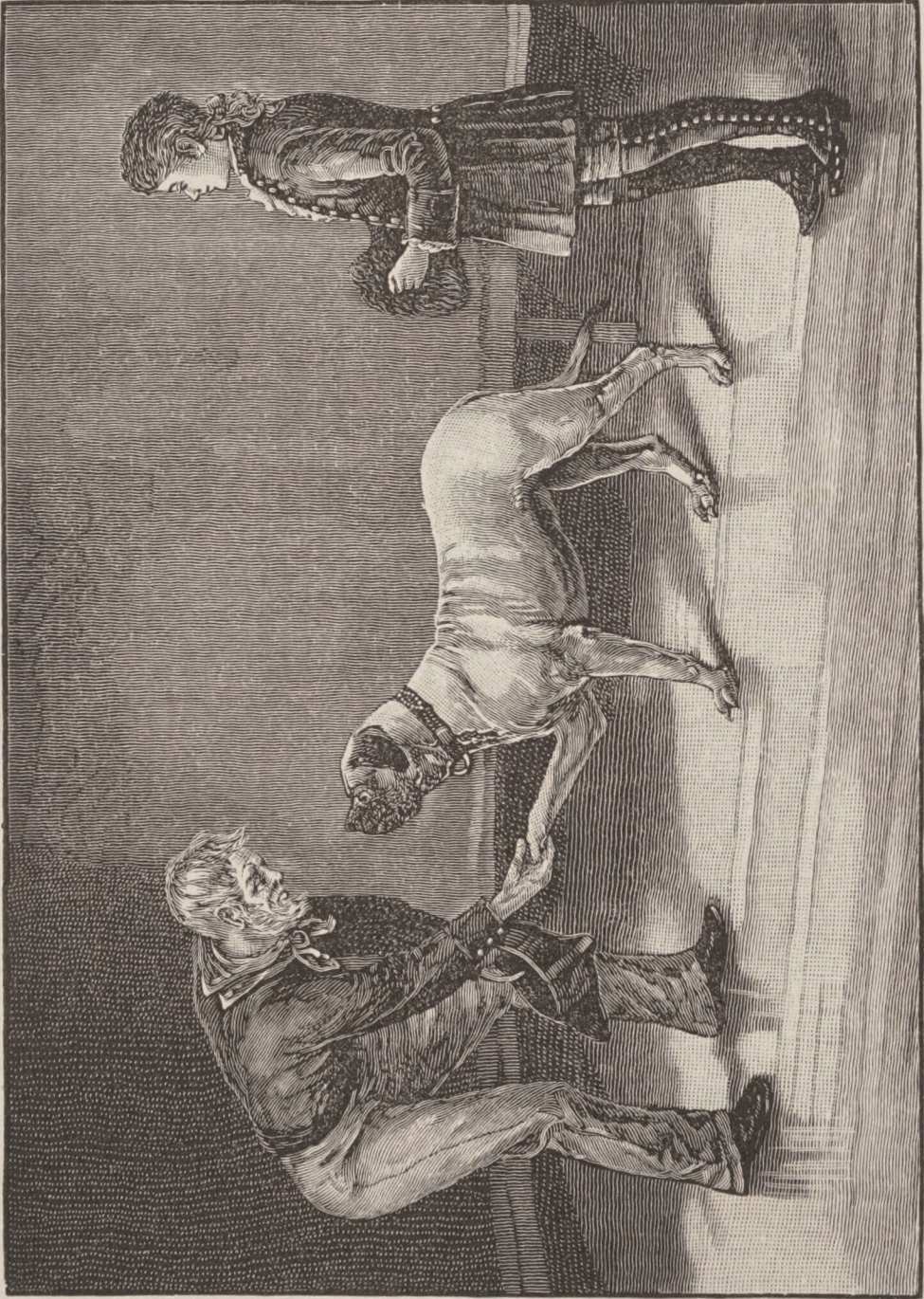
preparation for the voyage. They were to sail in the "Francis,"—a fine, fast gun-brig of about three hundred tons,—which had in her hold a very valuable cargo, consisting of the Duke of Kent's library, together with a quantity of very costly furniture, precious wines and other luxuries intended to make as comfortable as possible the lot of his royal highness in the garrison at Halifax. The major and Eric were assigned a roomy cabin to themselves, in which they at once proceeded to make themselves at home.

During the few days that intervened before the sailing of the "Francis," Eric's enjoyment of the novel scenes around him could hardly be put into words. All he knew about the sea was what he had learned from a summer now and then at a watering-place and the great gathering of big ships at Chatham; the unceasing bustle as some came in from long voyages, and others went forth to take their places upon distant stations; the countless sailors and dock hands swarming like ants hither and thither; the important-looking officers strutting about in gold-laced coats, and calling out their commands in such hoarse tones that Eric felt tempted to ask if they all had very bad colds; the shrill sound of the boatswains' whistles that seemed to have no particular meaning; the martial music of bands playing, apparently for no other

reason than just because they wanted to—all this made up a wonder-world for Eric, in which he found a great deal of delight.

There was just one cloud upon his happiness. Among his many pets at Oakdene his special favorite was a splendid mastiff that the squire had given him as a birthday present two years before. Prince was a superb animal, and devoted to his young master. No sooner had it been settled that Eric should go out to his father than the boy at once asked if his dog might not go with him. Major Maunsell had no objection himself, but feared that the captain of the "Francis" would not hear of it. However, he thought that Eric might bring the dog up to Chatham, and then if the captain would not let him on board he could be sent back to Oakdene.

Prince accordingly accompanied him, and a place having been found for him with a friend of the major's, his master had no peace of mind until the question was settled. Some days passed before he got a chance to see Captain Reefwell, who was, of course, extremely busy, but at last he managed to catch him one day, just after lunch, when he seemed in a pretty good humor, and, without wasting time, preferred his request, trembling with eager hope as he did so. The gruff old sailor at first bluntly refused him, but Eric, bravely returning to



The Wreckers of Sable Island.

the charge, his kind heart was moved to the extent of making him say :

“ Well, let me have a look at your dog, anyway.”

Hoping for the best, Eric ran off and returned with Prince. Captain Reefwell scanned the noble animal critically, and stretched out his hand to pat him, whereupon the mastiff gravely lifted his right paw, and placed it in the captain’s horny palm.

“ Shiver my timbers ! but the dog’s got good manners,” said the captain in surprise. “ Did you teach him that ? ” turning to Eric.

“ Yes, sir,” replied Eric, proudly, “ and he can do other things too.” And he proceeded to put the big dog through a number of tricks, which pleased the old sailor so much that finally he said, with a smile :

“ All right, my lad. You may bring your dog on board. But, mind you, he comes before the mast. He’s not a cabin passenger.”

“ Oh, thank you, sir ! thank you, sir ! ” cried Eric, joyfully. “ I won’t let you in the cabin, will I, Prince ? Isn’t it splendid ? You’re to come with me, after all.” And he hugged the mastiff as though he had been his own brother.

CHAPTER II.

IN ROUGH WEATHER.

IT was the first of November when the "Francis" got off, and Captain Reefwell warned his passengers that they might expect a rather rough voyage, as they were sure to have a storm or two in crossing at that time of year. Eric protested that he would not mind. He was not afraid of a storm. Indeed, he wanted to see one really good storm at sea, such as he had often read about.

But he changed his tune when the "Francis" began to pitch and toss in the chops of the English Channel, and with pale face and piteous voice he asked the major "if a real storm were worse than this." A few days later, however, when he got his sea-legs all right, and the "Francis" was bowling merrily over the broad Atlantic before a favoring breeze, his courage came back to him, and he felt ready for anything.

The "Francis" was not more than a week out before the captain's prediction began to be fulfilled. One storm succeeded another with but little rest between, the wind blowing from all quarters in turn. Driven hither and thither before it, the "Francis" struggled gallantly

toward her destination. So long as he was out in mid-Atlantic, Captain Reefwell seemed quite indifferent to the boisterous weather. He told his passengers that he was sorry for the many discomforts they were forced to endure, but otherwise showed no concern. He was a daring sailor, and had crossed the ocean a score of times before. As they approached the American side, however, and the storm still continued, he grew very anxious, as his troubled countenance and moody manner plainly showed. The truth was that he had been driven out of his course, and had lost his reckoning, owing to sun and stars alike having been invisible for so many days. He had no clear idea of his distance from the coast, and unless he could soon secure a satisfactory observation the "Francis" would be in a perilous plight.

The first of December was marked by a storm more violent than any which had come before, followed by a dense fog which swathed the ship in appalling gloom. The captain evidently regarded this fog as a very grave addition to his difficulties. He hardly left the quarter-deck, and his face grew haggard and his eyes bloodshot with being constantly on the lookout.

Realizing that a crisis was at hand, and determined to know the worst, Major Maunsell made bold to ask the captain to tell him the real state of affairs. Captain

Reefwell hesitated for a moment, then muttering something about "might as well out with it," he laid his hand upon the major's shoulder, and looking straight into his eyes, with a strange expression of sympathy, said in his gravest tones:

"Major, it's just this: Unless I'm clean lost we must now be somewhere near Sable Island. I'm expecting to hear the roar of its breakers any minute, and once the 'Francis' gets amongst them, God help us all! Sable Island makes sure work." And he turned away abruptly as though to hide his feelings.

Captain Reefwell's words sent a shudder straight and swift through Major Maunsell's heart. The latter already knew of the bad reputation of that strange island which scarcely lifts itself above the level of the Atlantic less than a hundred miles due east from Nova Scotia. Stories that chilled the blood had from time to time floated up to Halifax—stories of shipwreck following fast upon shipwreck, and no one surviving to tell the tale.

But even more appalling than the fury of the storm that scourged the lonely island were the deeds, said to be done by monsters in human guise, who plied the wrecker's trade there, and acting upon the principle that dead men tell no tales, had made it their care to put out of the way all whom even the cruel billows had spared.

With a heavy heart the major made his way back to the cabin, where he found Eric, upon whose bright spirits the long and stormy voyage had told heavily, looking very unhappy as he tried to amuse himself with a book. The boy was worn out by the ceaseless pitching and tossing of the vessel. He felt both home-sick and sea-sick, as indeed did many another of the passengers, who with one accord were wishing themselves safely upon land again. He looked up eagerly as the major entered.

“What does the captain say, major?” he asked, his big brown eyes open their widest. “Will the storm soon be over, and are we near Halifax?”

Concealing his true feelings, the major replied with well-put-on cheerfulness:

“The captain says that if this fog would only lift, and let him find out exactly where we are, Eric, he would be all right. There is nothing to do but to wait, and hope for the best.” And sitting down beside Eric, he threw his arm about him in a tender, protecting way, that showed how strongly he felt.

So intense was the anxiety on board the “Francis,” that none of the passengers thought of going to their berths or taking off their clothes that night; but all gathered in the cabins, finding what cheer and comfort they could in one another’s company.

In the main cabin were other officers besides Major Maunsell, namely, Captain Sterling of the Fusiliers, Lieutenant Mercer of the Royal Artillery, and Lieutenants Sutton, Roebuck, and Moore, of the 16th Light Dragoons; while in the fore-cabin were household servants of the Prince, and soldiers of the line, bringing the total number of passengers up to two hundred.

During the night Captain Reefwell, seeing that it was no longer any use to conceal the seriousness of the situation, sent word to all on board to prepare for the worst, as the ship might be among the breakers at any moment. The poor passengers hastened to gather their most precious possessions into little bundles, and to prepare themselves for the approaching struggle with death.

The night wore slowly on, the sturdy brig straining and groaning, as the billows made a plaything of her, tossing her to and fro as though she was no heavier than a chip, while the fierce storm shrieked through the rigging in apparent glee at having so rich a prize for the wreckers of Sable Island.

It was a brave band that awaited its fate in the main cabin. The men were borne up by the dauntless fortitude of the British soldiers; and catching their spirit, Eric manifested a quiet courage well worthy of the name he bore. He had Prince with him now, for the

captain had himself suggested that he had better have the dog near at hand. The noble creature seemed to have some glimmering of their common peril, for he kept very close to his young master, and every now and then laid his huge head upon Eric's knee, and looked up into his face with an expression that said as plainly as words:

"Nothing but death can ever part us. You can depend upon me to the very uttermost."

And hugging him, fondly, Eric answered:

"Dear old Prince. You'll help me if we are wrecked, won't you?" at which Prince wagged his tail responsively and did his best to lick his master's face.

Now and then some one would creep up on deck, and brave the fury of the blast for a few moments, in hope of finding some sign of change for the better, and on his return to the cabin the others would eagerly scan his countenance, and await his words, only to be met with a sorrowful shake of the head that rendered words unnecessary.

Eric alone found temporary forgetfulness in sleep. He was very weary, and though fully alive to the danger so near at hand, could not keep from falling into a fitful slumber, as he lay upon the cushioned seat that encircled the cabin; Prince stationing himself at his side, and pillowing his head in his lap.

Poor Prince was by no means so handsome a creature now as when his good looks and good manners won the captain's heart. The long stormy passage had been very hard upon him. He had grown gaunt, and his smooth shiny skin had become rough and unkempt. Otherwise, however, he was not much the worse, and was quite ready for active duty if his services should be needed.

Awaking from a light sleep, in which he dreamed that he and Prince were having a glorious romp on the lawn at Oakdene, which somehow seemed to be undulating in a very curious fashion, Eric caught sight of Major Maunsell returning to the cabin after a visit to the upper deck, and at once ran up to him, and plied him with eager questions:

"Is the storm getting any better, and will it soon be daylight again?"

The major did his best to look cheerful as he answered:

"Well, the storm is no worse, Eric, at all events, and it will not be long before daylight comes."

"But even if we should be wrecked," said Eric, looking pleadingly into the major's face, "we might all get ashore all right, mightn't we? I've often read of shipwrecks in which everybody was saved."

"Certainly, my boy, certainly," replied the major,

promptly, although deep down in his heart he seemed to hear Captain Reefwell's ominous words: "Sable Island makes sure work."

"And, major," continued Eric, "I'm going to keep tight hold of Prince's collar if we do get wrecked. He can swim ever so much better than I can, and he'll pull me ashore, all right, won't he?"

"That's a capital idea of yours, my boy," said the major, smiling tenderly upon him. "Keep tight hold of Prince by all means. You couldn't have a better life-preserver."

"I don't want to be wrecked, that's certain; but if we are, I'm very glad I've got Prince here to help me—the dear old fellow that he is!" And so saying, Eric threw himself down upon his dog, and gave him a hearty hug, which the mastiff evidently much enjoyed.

Day broke at last, if the slow changing of the thick darkness into a dense gray fog could rightly be called daybreak.

The "Francis" still bravely battled with the tempest. She had proven herself a trusty ship, and with Captain Reefwell on the quarter-deck, more than a match for the worst fury of wind and wave.

But no ship that ever has been, or ever will be built could possibly pass through the ordeal of the Sable Island

breakers, whose awful thunder might, at any moment, be heard above the howling of the blast.

At breakfast time the worn and weary passengers gathered around the table for what would, in all probability, be the last meal on board the "Francis," and perhaps their last on earth. The fare was not very tempting; for what could the cooks do under such circumstances? But the passengers felt no disposition to complain. Indeed, they had little appetite to eat, and were only making a pretence of doing so, when a sailor burst into the cabin, his bronzed face blanched with fear, as he shouted, breathlessly :

"Captain says for all to come up on deck. The ship will strike in a minute."

Instantly there was wild confusion and a mad rush for the companion-way; but Major Maunsell waited to take Eric's hand tightly into his before pressing on with the others. When they reached the deck, an awful scene met their eyes. The fog had lifted considerably, so that it was possible to see some distance from the ship; and there right across her bows, not more than a quarter of a mile away, a tremendous line of breakers stretched as far as eye could see.

Straight into their midst the "Francis" was helplessly driving at the bidding of the storm-fiend. No possible

way of escape! Not only did the breakers extend to right and left until they were lost in the shifting fog, but the nearest line was evidently only an advance-guard; for beyond it other lines, not less formidable, could be dimly descried, rearing their snowy crests of foam as they rolled fiercely onward.

“Heaven help us!” cried Major Maunsell, as with one swift glance he took in the whole situation; and drawing Eric close to him, he made his way through the confusion to the foot of the main-mast, which offered a secure hold for the time being.

A few minutes later the “Francis” struck the first bar with a shock that sent everybody who had not something to hold on to tumbling upon the deck. But for the major’s forethought, both he and Eric might at that moment have been borne off into the boiling surges; for a tremendous billow rushed upon the helpless vessel, sweeping her from stem to stern, and carrying away a number of the soldiers, who having nothing to hold on by, were picked up like mere chips of wood, and hurried to their doom. Their wild cries for the help that could not be given them pierced the ears of the others, who did not know but that the next billow would treat them in like manner.

Again and again was the ill-starred ship thus swept by

the billows, each time fresh victims falling to their fell fury. Then came a wave of surpassing size, which lifting the "Francis" as though she had been a mere feather, bore her over the bar into the deeper water beyond. Here, after threatening to go over upon her beam ends, she righted once more, and drove on toward the next bar.

CHAPTER III.

THE WRECK.

MAJOR MAUNSELL gave a great gasp of relief when the brig righted.

“Keep tight hold of your rope, Eric,” he cried, encouragingly. “Please God, we may reach shore alive yet.”

Drenched to the skin, and shivering with cold, Eric held tightly on to the rope with his right hand, and to Prince’s collar with his left. Prince had crouched close to the foot of the mast, and the waves swept by him as though he had been carved in stone.

“All right, sir,” Eric replied, as bravely as he could. “It’s pretty hard work ; but I’ll not let go.”

Rearing and plunging amid the froth and foam, the “Francis ” charged at the second bar, struck full upon it with a force that would have crushed in the bow of a less sturdy craft, hung there for a few minutes while the breakers, as if greedy for their prey, swept exultantly over her, and then, responding to the impulse of another towering wave, leaped over the bar into the deeper water beyond.

But she could not stand much more of such buffeting ; for she was fast becoming a mere hulk. Both masts had gone by the board at the last shock, and poor little Eric certainly would have gone overboard with the main-mast but for his prompt rescue by the major from the entangling rigging.

“ You had a narrow escape that time, Eric,” said the major, as he dragged the boy round to the other side of the mast, where he was in less danger.

The passage over the bars having thus been effected, the few who were still left on board the “ Francis ” began to cherish hopes of yet reaching the shore alive.

Between the bars and the main body of the island was a heavy cross-sea, in which the brig pitched and tossed like a bit of cork. Somewhere beyond this wild confusion of waters was the surf which broke upon the beach itself, and in that surf the final struggle would take place. Whether or not a single one of the soaked, shivering beings clinging to the deck would survive it, God alone knew. The chances of their escape were as one in a thousand—and yet they hoped.

There were not many left now. Captain Sterling was gone, and Lieutenants Mercer and Sutton. Besides the Major and Eric, only Lieutenants Roebuck and Moore, of the cabin passengers, were still to be seen. Of the

soldiers and crew, almost all had been swept away ; but Captain Reefwell still held to his post upon the quarter-deck by keeping tight hold to a belaying-pin.

The distance between the bars and the beach was soon crossed, and the long line of foaming billows became distinct through the driving mist.

“Don’t lose your grip on Prince, my boy,” called the major to Eric. “We’ll strike in a second, and then——”

But before he could finish the sentence the ship struck the beach with fearful force, and was instantly buried under a vast mountain of water that hurled itself upon her, as though it had long been waiting for the chance to destroy her. When the billow had spent its force, the decks were clear ! Not a human form was visible where a moment before more than a score of men had been clinging for dear life ! Hissing and seething like things of life, and sending their spray and spume high into the mist-laden air, the merciless breakers bore their victims off to cast them contemptuously upon the beach. Then, ere they could scramble ashore, they would be caught up again, and carried off by the recoil of the wave, to be once more dashed back, as though they were the play-things of the water.

The major and Eric were separated in the wild confusion ; but Eric was not parted from Prince. About his

brawny neck the mastiff wore a stout leathern collar, and to this Eric clung with a grip that not even the awful violence of the breakers could unloose. Rather did it make his sturdy fingers but close the tighter upon the leathern band.

Into the boiling flood the boy and dog were plunged together, and bravely they battled to make the shore. The struggle would be a tremendous one for them, and the issue only too doubtful. The slope of the beach was very gradual, and there was a long distance between where the brig struck and the dry land. Wholly blinded and half-choked by the driving spray, Eric could do nothing to direct his course. But he could have had no better pilot than the great dog, whose unerring instinct pointed him straight to the shore.

How long they struggled with the surf, Eric could not tell. But his strength had failed, and his senses were fast leaving him, when his feet touched something firmer than tossing waves, and presently he and Prince were lifted up, and then hurled violently upon the sand. Had he been alone, the recoil of the wave would certainly have carried him back again into the surge; but the dog dug his big paws into the soft beach, and forced his way up, dragging his master with him.

Dizzy, bewildered, and faint, Eric staggered to his feet,

looked about him in hope of finding the major near, and then, seeing nobody, fell forward upon the sand in a dead faint.

How long he lay unconscious upon the beach, Eric had no idea; but when he at length came to himself, he found a big, bushy-bearded man bending over him, with a half-pitying, half-puzzled look, while beside him, ready for a spring, was faithful Prince, regarding him with a look that said as plainly as words :

“Attempt to do my master any harm, and I will be at your throat.

But the big man seemed to have no evil intent. He had evidently been waiting for Eric to gain consciousness, and, as soon as the boy opened his eyes, said in a gruff, but not unkind voice :

“So you’re not dead, after all, my hearty. More’s the pity, may be. Old Evil-Eye ’ll be wanting to make a clean job of it, as usual.”

Eric did not at all take in the meaning of the stranger’s words; his senses had not yet fully returned. He felt a terrible pain in his head and a distressing nausea, and when he tried to get upon his feet, he found the effort too much for him. He fell back with a cry of pain, that made the affectionate mastiff run up to him and gently lick his face, as though to say :

“What’s the matter, dear master? Can I do anything for you?”

The man then seemed, for the first time, to take notice of the dog; and, putting forth a huge horny hand, he patted him warily, muttering under his beard:

“Sink me straight, but it’s a fine beast. I’ll have him for my share, if I have to take the boy along with him.”

Perceiving by some subtle instinct the policy of being civil, Prince permitted himself to be patted by the stranger, and then lay down again beside him in a manner that betokened: “When wanted, I’m ready.”

Eric was eager to hear about Major Maunsell and the others who had been on board the “Francis.” Were it not for his weakness he would be running up and down the beach in search of them. But the terrible struggle with the surf, following upon the long exposure to the storm, had completely exhausted him, and he was sorely bruised besides. Turning his face up to the strange man, who seemed to have nothing further to say on his own account, he asked him, anxiously:

“Where’s Major Maunsell? Is he all right?”

Instead of answering, the man looked away from Eric, and there was an expression on his face that somehow sent a chill of dread to the boy’s heart.

“Please tell me what has happened. Oh! take me to

him, won't you? He's looking after me, you know," he pleaded earnestly, the tears beginning to well from his eyes.

Still the big man kept silence. Then, as Eric pressed him with entreaty, he suddenly wheeled about, and spoke in gruffer tones than he had so far used:

"You'd best be still and keep quiet. You'll never see Major Maunsell, as you call him, or any of the rest of them again, and you might just as well know it first as last."

At these dreadful words Eric raised himself, by a great effort, to a sitting posture, gazed into the man's face as though hoping to find some sign of his not being in earnest, and then, with a cry of frantic grief, flung himself back, and buried his face in his hands, while his whole frame shook with the violence of his sobbing.

The man stood watching him in silence, although his face, hard and stern as it was, gave evidence of his being moved to sympathy with the boy. He seemed to be thinking deeply, and to be in much doubt as to what he should do. He was just about to stoop down and lift Eric up; when a harsh, grating voice, called out:

"Halloo, Ben! What have you got there?"

CHAPTER IV.

ALONE AMONG STRANGERS.

BEN started as though he had been caught at some crime, and there was a sulky tone in his voice that showed very plainly that he resented the appearance of the questioner, as he replied :

“Only a boy and a dog.”

The other man drew near and inspected Eric closely. Prince at once sprang to his feet, and, taking up his position between the new-comer and his young master, fixed his big eyes upon the former, while his teeth showed threateningly, and a deep growl issued from between them.

It was no wonder that the sagacious mastiff's suspicions were aroused; for surely never before had his eyes fallen upon so sinister a specimen of humanity. The man was of little more than medium height; but his frame showed great strength, combined with unusual activity, and one glance was sufficient to mark him out as a man with whom few could cope. His countenance, naturally ugly, had been the playground of the strongest and coarsest passions that degrade humanity, and was



The Wreckers of Sable Island.

rendered still more hideous by the loss of his left eye, which had been gouged out in a drunken *mêlée*, and by a frightful scar that ran clear from temple to chin on the right side of his face. Through the remaining eye all the vile nature of the man found expression, and its baleful glare, when fixed full upon one, was simply appalling.

To it, perhaps more than to any other quality, Evil-Eye—for so his comrades appropriately nicknamed him—owed his influence among them; for he was, in some sort, regarded as the leader of the band of wreckers to which both he and Ben belonged.

Evil-Eye held in his right hand a cutlass whose sheen was already dimmed with suspicious stains.

“Well,” he growled, pointing at Eric, who was staring at him spellbound with horror and dread. “That seems to be the last of them. Let’s finish him off. We want no tell-tales. Out of the way, you brute!” And he lifted his cutlass as though to strike Prince first.

“Hold,” cried Ben, springing forward and grasping Evil-Eye’s arm. “Let the boy alone!”

“Let him alone!” roared Evil-Eye, with a horrible oath. “That I won’t. Let go of me, will you?” And wrenching himself free by a tremendous effort, he swung the cutlass high over his head, and rushed upon the

defenseless boy, who was too terror-stricken to move or cry out.

But quick as Evil-Eye's movements had been, there was another present whose movements were quicker still. With a short, deep growl like a distant roll of thunder, Prince launched himself full at the ruffian's throat. His aim was unerring, and utterly unprepared for so sudden an onset, the man rolled over upon the sand, the cutlass falling harmlessly from his hand.

Content with having brought him to the ground, Prince did not pursue his advantage farther, but stood over the prostrate scoundrel, who made no attempt to move, while he implored Ben to drag the dog off him.

But this Ben seemed in no hurry to do. He evidently enjoyed his associate's sudden defeat, and felt little sympathy for him in his present predicament. Then as he looked from the growling mastiff to his young master, who had almost forgotten his own fear in his admiration for his faithful dog, a happy thought flashed into his mind. His face brightened, and there was a half-smile upon it, as, turning to Evil-Eye, who scarce dared to breathe, lest those great black jaws, so close to his throat, would close tight upon it, he said:

"Look here, Evil-Eye. I'll take the dog off on one condition. Will you agree?"

"What is that?" groaned Evil-Eye.

"Why, I've taken a fancy to this lad and his dog, and want to keep them for a while, anyway. Now, if you'll give me your oath that you'll let them alone so long as I want them, I'll get the dog off; but if you won't, I'll just let you have it out with him."

Evil-Eye did not answer at once. Twisting his head, he looked around to see if any other of his companions were near; but there was not a soul in sight, and the storm was still raging.

"All right, Ben, I'll swear," he said sulkily, and then a crafty gleam came into his baleful eye as he added, "And say, Ben, will you give me half your share of this take if I stand by you for the boy? They'll be wanting him finished off, maybe."

Ben was about to say something bitter in reply, but checked himself as though second thoughts were best. Yet he could not entirely conceal his contempt in his tone as he replied:

"As you like. These two are what I want most this time. But, mind you, Evil-Eye, if any harm comes to either of them through your doing, your own blood shall pay for it, so sure as my name's Ben Harden." Then, turning to Eric, he said:

"Here, boy, you can call off your dog now."

Eric obeyed the directions at once. "Come here, Prince!" he commanded. "Come to me, sir!"

Prince wagged his tail to indicate that he heard the order, but was evidently in some doubt as to the wisdom of obeying it. According to his way of thinking, the best place for Evil-Eye was just where he had him, and he would like to keep him there a while longer, anyway.

But Eric insisted, and at length the dog obeyed, and came over to him, turning, however, to glance back at Evil-Eye, as though he was just itching to tumble him over again.

Looking very much out of humor, Evil-Eye pulled himself together, and put his hand to his throat in order to make sure that Prince's teeth had done him no injury. Fortunately for him, the high collar of the great coat he wore had been turned up all around to keep out the rain, and it had done him still better service by keeping out the mastiff's teeth. So he was really none the worse for the encounter beyond feeling sulky at his discomfiture.

He now for the first time took a good look at Eric, who had also risen to his feet, the excitement of the encounter having made him forget his pain and weakness.

"Humph! rather a likely lad," he grunted. "But he

may give us trouble some time. Have you thought of that, Ben?"

"No; but it doesn't matter," answered Ben. "I'll warrant for his not getting us into trouble. We can manage that all right when the time comes."

"Humph! maybe. But it's a risk, all the same," returned Evil-Eye. "But come, we must be off. We've lost too much time already."

The all-prevailing gloom of the day was already deepening into the early dark of late autumn as the three set off across the sands. The spray that the storm tore from the crests of the billows dashed in their faces as they advanced. Eric could not have gone far had not Ben thrown his brawny arm around him, and almost carried him along. Prince trotted quietly at his heels, having quite regained his composure, and resigned himself to the situation.

In this fashion they had gone some distance, and Evil-Eye, who had kept a little ahead, was about to turn off to the right toward the interior of the island, when Prince suddenly sniffed the air eagerly, threw up his head with a curious cry, half whine, half bark, and then bounded away in the direction of the water. Eric stopped to watch him, and following him close up with his eyes, saw that he ran up to a dark object that lay

stretched out upon the sand, about fifty yards away. The dog touched it with his nose, and then, lifting his head, gave a long, weird howl, that so startled Eric as to make him forget his weariness. Breaking away from Ben, who, indeed, made no effort to detain him, he hastened over to see what Prince had found.

Darkness was coming on, but before he had got half way to the object he could make out that it was a human body, and a few steps nearer made it plain that the body was that of Major Maunsell!

Horror-stricken, yet hoping that the major might still be living, Eric rushed forward, and throwing himself down beside the motionless form, cried, passionately:

“Major Maunsell! What’s the matter? Can’t you look up? Oh, surely you’re not dead!”

But the major made no response. Beyond all doubt his body was cold in death, and as Eric looked upon the white, set face, he saw that his cries were useless, and that his dear, kind friend had gone from him forever. He felt as though his heart would break, and glancing around through his tears at the two strange, rough-looking men upon whose mercy the storm had cast him, his own fate seemed so dark and doubtful that he almost wished that, like the major, he too was lying upon the sands in the same quite sleep.

The discovery of the major's death was a greater shock than the boy, in his exhausted condition, could stand, and when, at the approach of the men, he attempted to rise, faintness overcame him once more, and he fell back unconscious.

When his senses returned, he found himself in a sort of bunk in one corner of a large room containing a number of men, whose forms and faces were made visible by the light from an immense wood-fire that roared and crackled at the farther end of the room. There were at least a score of these men, and, so far as he could make out, they were all rough, shaggy, wild-looking fellows, like Ben and Evil-Eye. The latter he could see plainly, sitting beside a table with a bottle before him, from which he had just taken a deep draught.

The liquor apparently loosened his tongue, for glancing about him with his single eye, whose fitful glare was frightful as the firelight flashed upon it, he began to talk vigorously to those who were sitting near him. At first Eric paid no attention to what he was saying, but when Evil-Eye held up something for the others to admire, he leaned forward curiously, to see what it was. There was not sufficient light for him to do this, but Evil-Eye came to his assistance by saying, in an exultant tone:

“There's a ring for you, my hearties. It'll bring a

pot of money, I wager you. And it ought to. I had trouble enough getting it."

"How was that?" inquired a man at his side.

"The thing wouldn't come off—stuck on tight. Had to chop off the finger before I could get it," replied the ruffian, turning the ring over so that the diamond which formed its centre might sparkle to the best advantage for the benefit of his companions, not one of whom but envied him his good luck in getting such a prize.

Eric now saw clearly enough what Evil-Eye was displaying. It was the costly ring which Major Maunsell always wore upon the third finger of his left hand, and whose beauty Eric had many a time admired, for it held a diamond of unusual size and of the purest water, which the major told him had been a sort of heirloom in the Maunsell family for many generations. Eric's blood boiled at the thought of this ring being in such a scoundrel's hands, and of the cruel way in which he had obtained it; and only his utter weakness prevented him from springing at Evil-Eye, and snatching the ring out of his hands.

Happily he had not the strength to carry out so rash an impulse, and was forced to content himself with making a solemn resolve to get possession of that ring in some manner that it might be returned to the major.

family. Determination was one of the boy's most marked characteristics. Nothing short of the conviction that it was certainly unattainable could deter him from anything upon which he had once set his heart; and immense as the odds against him in the matter of the ring might be, he vowed with all the vigor of his brave young heart that he would do his utmost to regain his dead friend's precious jewel.

For the present, however, nothing could be done. He was a captive no less than the ring, and, for aught he knew, equally in the power of that brute in human form, who was evidently a leading spirit in the group of ruffians that occupied the room. Clearly enough, his one hope lay in attracting as little attention as possible.

He looked anxiously about the room in search of Ben, but could see nothing of him. His good Prince, however, was stretched out upon the floor beside the bunk, sleeping as soundly as though he were in his own cozy quarters at Oakdene. The sight of him comforted Eric not a little. So lonely did he feel that he could not resist the temptation to awake his faithful companion, so he called, softly :

“Prince, Prince, come here ! ”

At first the mastiff did not hear him, but, Eric repeat-

ing the call, he awoke, looked up inquiringly, and then, rising slowly to his feet,—for he was very tired after the terrible passage through the surf,—went over and laid his huge head upon his master's breast.

“Dear old dog!” murmured Eric, fondling him lovingly. “Oh, Prince! what is to become of us? If we were only back in Oakdene again!” And then, as the awful thought rushed in upon his mind that perhaps neither he nor Prince would ever see Oakdene again, or find their way to Doctor Copeland at Halifax, the tears he had been bravely keeping back could no longer be restrained. Sobbing as though his heart would break, he clasped Prince's head tightly in his arms and gave himself up to his grief.

While poor Eric was thus giving away to his feelings, a number of men entered the room, one of them being Ben Harden. He went up to the weeping boy, and, sitting down on the edge of the bunk, said, in quite a kindly tone:

“What's the matter, my lad? Feeling homesick, eh! Well, I can't blame you. It's a poor place you've come to. But cheer up, and make the best of it. You'll feel better when you get rested.”

With a great effort Eric gulped down his sobs, and wiped away his fast-falling tears. He felt much relieved

at seeing Ben again, and did his best to give him a smile of welcome as he said :

“ Oh, I’m so glad you’ve come. Everything seems so strange here.”

A grim smile broke the habitual sternness of the big man’s face.

“ Strange! Yes; no doubt. It is a strange place. Perhaps you’ll think it stranger before you leave it,” said he, adding in an undertone to himself, so that Eric hardly caught the words, “ that is, if you ever do leave it.”

A large pot hung on a kind of wooden crane before the fire, and pointing to it Ben asked Eric if he wouldn’t like something to eat. Then, without waiting for a reply, he went over to the table, and picking up a plate, proceeded to fill it from the pot, and having added a spoon, brought it back to Eric.

Now, trouble may take away the appetite of older people, but with a hearty, healthy boy, hunger may always be trusted to insist upon being attended to. Eric had not tasted food since early morning, and it was now approaching midnight. Could any one who knew anything about boys find it in their heart to criticise him if the plateful of savory stew vanished rapidly before his dexterous wielding of the spoon?

Ben was highly pleased at his *protege's* vigorous appetite.

"Well done, my hearty!" he exclaimed. "That's the best kind of physic for you. You'll soon be yourself again. Now, then, just you lie down and take a good snooze, and that'll finish the cure."

Eric was just about to throw himself back upon the pillow, when he caught sight of Prince, who had been watching him with eager eyes while he satisfied his hunger.

"My poor Prince!" he cried. "I was forgetting all about you. Please can't he have some dinner too?"

"Sartin!" said Ben. "The brute must be hungry. I'll give him a good square meal." And filling a tin dish from the pot, he sat it before the mastiff, who attacked it ravenously.

Eric felt decidedly better for his hearty meal. A luxurious sense of warmth and languor stole over him. He stretched himself out upon his comfortable couch, and in a few moments sank into a deep, dreamless sleep. Prince having licked the dish until it shone again, resumed his position beside the bunk, and fell asleep also.

CHAPTER V.

ERIC LOOKS ABOUT HIM.

IT was broad daylight when the boy awoke, and he felt very well pleased at finding no one in the room but Ben, who sat by the table, evidently waiting for him to open his eyes. As soon as he did so, the latter noticed it, and coming up to the bunk, said, in his gruff way :

“Oh, ho! Awake at last. Was wondering if you were going to sleep all day. Feel like turning out?”

“Of course,” replied Eric, brightly. “I feel all right now.”

On getting out of the bunk, however, he found himself so dreadfully stiff and sore, that it was positively painful to move, and he had much difficulty in dragging himself over to the table, where he found a pile of ship's biscuit and a pannikin of tea awaiting him. He did not feel at all so hungry as he had the night before, and this very plain repast seemed very unattractive, accustomed as he was to the best of fare. He nibbled at the biscuit, took a sip of the tea, and then pushed the things away, saying:

"I don't want any breakfast, thank you. I'm not a bit hungry."

Ben was too shrewd not to guess the true reason of the boy's indifferent appetite.

"There's not much choice of grub on Sable Island," said he, with one of his grim smiles. "You'll have to take kindly to hard-tack and tea if you don't want to starve."

"But really I am not hungry," explained Eric, eagerly, afraid of seeming not to appreciate his friend's hospitality. "If I were, I'd eat the biscuits fast enough, for I'm quite fond of them."

Ben now proceeded to fill and light a big pipe.

"Do you smoke?" he asked, after he had got it in full blast.

"Oh, no," answered Eric. "My father doesn't believe in boys smoking, and has forbidden me to learn."

"Your father's a sensible man, my boy," said Ben; then added, "Well, you'd best stay about the hut to-day, since you feel so stiff. I've got to go off, but I'll be back by mid-day." He put on his hat and went away, leaving Eric and Prince in possession of the establishment.

Eric did not by any means like the idea of being left alone, but he naturally shrank from saying so. He went to the door and regretfully looked after the tall figure

striding swiftly over the sand, until it disappeared behind a hillock, beyond which he thought must be the ocean.

Now that he was left entirely to his own resources, Eric's curiosity began to assert itself. Had he but known in what direction to go, and felt equal to the task, his first business would certainly have been to set forth in search of the scene of the wreck ; if haply he might find traces of other survivors besides himself.

But neither could he tell where to go, nor was he fit to walk any great distance. For aught he knew, he might be miles from the beach where the "Francis" finally struck. Anyway, Evil-Eye was certain to be there, hunting for more prizes, and he had no wish to encounter him. So he proceeded to examine his strange surroundings.

The hut—for despite its size, it was really nothing more than a hut—was a very curious building. It had evidently been put together by many hands, out of the wreckage of many ships, the builders apparently being more proficient in ship-carpentry than house-joining. Their labors had resulted, through an amazing adaptation of knees, planking, stanchions, and bulk-heads, in a long, low-ceilinged, but roomy building, something after the shape of a large vessel's poop. For lighting and ventilation it depended upon a number of port-holes ir-

regularly put in. Running around two sides of the room was a row of bunks, very much like those in a fore-castle, the tier being two high. Eric counted them. There were just thirty, and he wondered if each had an occupant. If so, he must have slept in Ben's last night, and where then had Ben himself slept?

Upon the walls of the other two sides of the room hung a great number of weapons of various kinds—cutlasses, swords, muskets, dirks, daggers, and pistols, a perfect armory, all carefully burnished and ready for use. They strongly excited Eric's curiosity, and he occupied himself examining them, one by one. One pair of pistols especially attracted his attention. They were of the very latest make, and the handles were beautifully inlaid with silver. He took one from the wall, and aimed at one of the port-holes with it. As he did so a thought flashed into his mind that gave him an electric thrill, and sent the blood bounding wildly through his veins.

What if that port-hole were the repulsive countenance of Evil-Eye, and they were alone together? Would he be able to resist the impulse to give with his forefinger the slight pressure upon the finely-balanced trigger that would send a bullet crashing into the ruffian's brain? So intense was his excitement that he almost staggered under its influence. For the first time in his life an over-

mastering passion for revenge, for retribution, took possession of him, and carried him out of himself. Smooth, clear, and bright as the lovely stream that watered the Oakdene meadows, had been the current of his life hitherto. To few boys had the lines fallen in pleasanter places.

Yet this happy fortune had not rendered him unmanly or irresolute. He was capable of conceiving and carrying out any purpose that lay within the range of a boy's powers. The Copeland courage and the Copeland determination were his inheritance.

Now never before had he been brought into contact with any one who had so roused his repulsion or hatred as Evil-Eye. Not only because of his hideous appearance and threatened violence, but because of Ben's dark hints and his own suspicions as to Evil-Eye being no better than a murderer, the very depths of his nature were stirred, and he felt as though it would be but right to inflict summary vengeance at the first opportunity.

Trembling with these strange, wild thoughts, he held the pistol still pointed at the port-hole, and unconsciously pressing upon the trigger, there was a sharp report, which caused Prince, dozing comfortably by the fire, to spring to his feet with a startled growl, following the crash of broken glass, as the bullet pierced the port-lid.

Almost at the same moment the door was thrown roughly open, and Evil-Eye entered the room.

“What are you doing with my pistols?” he cried, his face aflame with rage, as he strode toward Eric.

Scarce knowing what he was doing, Eric snatched up the other pistol, and darted around the big table so that it would form a barrier between himself and Evil-Eye. His hand was perfectly steady now, and leveling the pistol at his assailant, he said, in a firm tone :

“Let me alone, or I’ll shoot you.”

With a fearful oath the ruffian drew a pistol from his belt, and in another moment blood would undoubtedly have been shed, had not Ben Harden rushed in through the open door, and snatching Evil-Eye’s pistol out of his hand, thrown it to the other end of the room, where it went off without harm to any one.

“You infernal scoundrel!” he roared. “If you don’t leave that boy alone, I’ll break every bone in your body.”

At first Evil-Eye was so completely taken aback by this unexpected interference, that he seemed dazed for a moment. Then his hand went again to his belt, as though he would turn his baffled fury upon Ben. But evidently a wiser second thought prevailed, and choking down his wrath, he growled out, contemptuously:

"Don't be in such a stew. I'm not going to hurt your baby. I was only teaching him manners, and not to meddle with other people's belongings, without first asking their leave."

This speech drew Ben's attention to the pistol Eric still held in his hand.

"Ah," said he; "you've got one of Evil-Eye's pets there, have you? Well, put it back in its place, and don't touch it again."

Feeling very confused, Eric replaced the pistols carefully, their owner watching him with a malign glare which boded him no good. Its meaning was not lost upon observant Ben.

"Come, my lad," said he; "a bit of an airing will do you good. Put on your cap, and come out with me."

Only too glad to obey, Eric picked up his cap, and calling to Prince, followed Ben out into the open air, leaving Evil-Eye alone in the hut.

The sun was high in the heavens, the sky almost cloudless, and the wind blew as softly and innocently from the South, as though it had not raged with fatal fury but a few hours before. Eric's spirits, which had been woefully depressed by the events of the past two days, began to rise a little; and he looked about him with much interest, as he trudged along through the deep sand.

Ben appeared to be in no mood for talking, and stalked on ahead in moody silence, puffing hard at the short black pipe which was hardly ever away from his mouth, except at meal time and when he was sleeping. Eric, therefore, did not bother him with questions, and found companionship in Prince, who showed lively satisfaction in being out-of-doors, frisking about, and barking loudly in the exuberance of his glee. One good night's rest and plenty to eat had been sufficient to completely restore his strength. He looked and felt quite equal to anything that might be required of him, and was an inexpressible comfort to Eric, to whom he seemed much more than a mere dog—a protector and friend, who could be trusted to the uttermost.

Half an hour's walking brought Ben to the highest point of a sand ridge, where he threw himself, waiting for Eric, who had lagged behind a little, to come up.

“Sit ye down, lad,” said he, when the boy reached him. “You’re feeling tired, no doubt.”

Eric was tired, and very glad indeed to seat himself near Ben, who continued to puff away at his pipe, as though he had nothing more to say. Thus left to himself, Eric let his eyes wander over the strange and striking scene spread out before him.

He was upon the crest of a sand-hill, a hundred feet or

more in height, which sloped to the beach, upon whose glistening sands the great billows were breaking, although the day was clear and calm. Far out beyond the serried lines of white-maned sea-courers, the ocean could be seen sleeping peacefully. Here and there, upon the sand-bars, the hulls of vessels in varying stages of destruction, told plainly how common was the fate which had befallen the "Francis," and how rich a field the wreckers had chosen for their dreadful business.

Turning to his right, Eric saw a long narrow lake in the middle of the island, its banks densely grown with rushes and lilies. Upon its placid surface flocks of ducks were paddling, while snipe and sand-pipe hopped along the margin. The valley of the lake presented a curious contrast to those portions of the island that faced seaward, for it was thickly carpeted with coarse grass and wild vines, which were still green enough to be grateful to the eye weary of the monotony of sand and sea.

Upon the left the island rose and fell, a succession of sand hills. Far in the distance, a faint line of white showed where it once more touched the ocean, and gave cause for other lines of roaring surges. All this and more had Eric time to take in before Ben broke silence. He had been regarding him very thoughtfully for a few moments, and at length he spoke :

“Well, lad,” said he, “I’ve been thinking much about ye. I’ve saved your life, but I’m not so clear in my mind but what it ’ud have been best to have let you go with the others.”

Eric gave a start of surprise, and there was an alarmed tone in his voice, as he exclaimed :

“Why, Mr. Ben what makes you say that?”

“Well, you see, it’s just this way,” answered Ben, slowly, as though he were puzzling out the best way to state the case. “You’re in a mighty bad box, and no mistake. Evil-Eye does not fancy you, and will take the first chance to do for you, if he can keep his own skin whole. Dead men tell no tales, is what he goes by, and if the folks over there,” jerking his thumb in the direction of the mainland, “only knew what goes on here, they’d be pretty sure to want to put a stop to it, and make us all smart for it finely. Now, it’s not likely you want to join us, and I’m no less sure that Evil-Eye will take precious good care not to let you go, for fear you should get his neck into the noose. That’s the only thing he’s afraid of. And so it just bothers me to make out what’s to be the end of the business.”

CHAPTER VI.

BEN HARDEN.

AS the words fell one by one from Ben's lips, Eric realized more and more clearly how critical was his situation. In his gladness at escape from the present peril of the wreck, he had forgotten to take thought for the future; but now he was brought face to face with a state of affairs by which that future was filled with dark foreboding. Little as he had seen of the men into whose midst he had been so strangely thrown, it was enough to make very plain to him that they wanted no witness of their doings.

So far they had been too much occupied with their own concerns to take much notice of him; but once he became the object of their attention, the question as to his disposal must be settled. The issue was more than doubtful, to say the least.

An awful feeling of desolation and despair came upon him. He seemed unable to utter a word, but looked up into Ben's bronzed face with an expression in which pathetic appeal was so mingled with harrowing dread, as to touch this strange man.

He sprang to his feet, dashed his pipe out of his mouth, clenched his huge fists, and shouted aloud, as though all the other wreckers were there to hear:

“By my soul! I saved ye, and I’m going to stand by ye. Whoever wants to do you harm ’ll have to reckon with Ben Harden first—and come what may, I’ll get you off this cursed place with a whole skin, somehow.”

Eric was as much surprised at Ben’s sudden display of strong feeling as he had been alarmed by his ominous words. He gazed at him, with wide-open mouth until the wrecker, recovering his self-control by an evident effort, threw himself down on the sand again, picked up his pipe, carefully relit it, and vigorously resumed puffing forth clouds of smoke.

It was some time before he spoke again. In a quiet, natural tone, he asked Eric:

“Have you any notion, my lad, why I troubled myself about ye, at all?”

Eric shook his head, and there was something inexpressibly winning in his smile, as he answered:

“No, sir. Unless because you have too kind a heart to let Evil-Eye do me any harm.”

Ben smiled in return, but it was in a grim sort of a way.

“My heart was softer once than it is now. There

were better days then, and never did I think that I'd come to be a wrecker on Sable Island," said he; and the remembrance of those better days evidently gave him saddening thoughts, for he relapsed into the moody silence that was his wont. It continued so long that Eric began to feel uncomfortable, and was about to move away a little in order to have a frolic with Prince, when Ben roused himself, and motioned him to draw near him.

"Sit ye down in front of me, my lad," said he, "and listen to me a bit, and I'll tell you why I couldn't find it in my heart to let any harm come to you. I had a boy of my own once, as trim a lad as ever sat in a boat, and many a fine trip we made together, for I was at an honest trade then, and wasn't ashamed to take my boy into it. Ah! lad, those were the good times. We went fishing on the Banks, getting our outfit at Halifax, and selling our fare there. But our home was at Chester, where I had a snug cottage, all my own, without a shilling of debt on it, and pretty well fitted up too. The wife—God rest her soul! she was a good wife to me—she looked after the cottage, and we looked after the little schooner, and after each trip we'd stay at home awhile, and have a little time together.

"We were mostly always in luck on the Banks, and it was not often the 'Sea-Slipper' missed a good fare, if there

were any fish to be caught. And so it went on, until I lost my lad. He and his mate were out in their dory fishing, and the cod were plentiful, and they were so full of catching them that they did not notice the fog coming up and creeping all around them. They lost their bearings, and no man ever set eyes on them again.

“I didn’t give up hoping I’d find them for months afterward. I cruised about the Banks, I called at all the ports that sent out Bankers, and I tried at Halifax, Boston, New York, and other big places, hoping that some ship might have picked them up. But not a word did I hear. There was a heavy blow right after the fog, and no doubt they were lost in that. I lost a lot of time hunting for my boy, and it seemed as though when he went my luck followed him. Everything went wrong. The fish would hardly touch my hooks, and I never got a full fare. Then the wife died. She never held up her head after the day I came home without our boy. I took to the drink. It didn’t make matters any better, of course, but I couldn’t keep from it.

“I got knocking about with a bad lot of chaps, and the end of it was, some of us came here. I don’t care how soon it’s all over with me. I hate this business, and I hate myself.”

Here Ben came to a pause, as though he had said more

than he intended; and Eric, not knowing what to interpose, looked at him in silent sympathy, until he began again.

“But I haven’t told ye why I saved ye from Evil-Eye.

“Well, it was just this way. When I found ye you were lying on the sand, like as though you were asleep; and you fairly gave me a start, you looked so like my own boy. He was just about your age when he was lost, and you’d be much the same size, and he had brown hair, just like yours.

“If my boy had been lying, half dead, on the beach, I’d have thought any man worse than a devil, that wouldn’t help the lad. So I just made up my mind to take your part, Evil-Eye or no Evil-Eye, and now I’m going to stick to it.”

Having spoken thus, Ben put his pipe back between his lips, evidently having no more to say. Eric hardly knew how to give expression to his feelings. Sympathy for his rescuer’s troubles and gratitude for his assurance of safe-keeping filled his heart. The tears gathered in his eyes, and his voice trembled as, turning to the big man beside him, he laid his hand upon his knee, and looking up into his face, said:

“You’ve been very good to me, Mr. Ben. You’re the

only friend I've got here, except Prince, and I'm sure you won't let any harm come to me, if you can help it. And I'm so sorry about your son. You see, we've both lost somebody. You've lost your boy, and I—I've lost my mother."

His voice sank to a whisper as he uttered the words, and the tears he had been bravely keeping back, overflowed upon his cheeks.

Ben said not a word; there was a suspicious glistening about his eyelids, and the quite superfluous vigor of his puffing told plainly enough that he was deeply moved. After a moment he rose to his feet, knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and putting it into his pocket, said:

"Come, lad, let us go back to the hut."

The two retraced their steps to the wreckers' abode. Eric now felt more at ease than he had since the shipwreck. With such protectors as Ben and Prince, he surely had not much to fear, even in the evil company among which he had been cast. As to the future—well, it certainly did seem dark. But he had been taught to put trust in the Heavenly Father to whom he prayed, and he looked up to him now for help and guidance.

When they arrived at the hut, they found the whole party of wreckers there, waiting somewhat impatiently for a huge negro to serve them their supper.

This negro did duty as cook; they called him Black Joe. They took little notice of the new-comers, and Eric, going quietly over to his bunk, sat down on the edge and looked about him. This was his first opportunity of getting a good look at his strange companions.

By listening to their conversation and studying their countenances, he made out that the majority of them were English, but that there were a few Frenchmen amongst them. There was only one negro, a stalwart, bull-necked, bullet-headed fellow, with a good-natured face, who seemed the butt of the others, and a target for their oaths and jeers, as he bustled about the fireplace preparing their food.

The whole party appeared to be in excellent humor, the cause thereof being plainly enough the fact of the "Francis" having proved so rich a prize. Each man had been able to secure sufficient plunder to satisfy him, so there was no necessity for quarreling over the division. They each had some precious find to boast of, and they vied with one another in relating with great gusto their successful efforts after the wreckage.

From what they said, Eric gathered that the "Francis" did not break up after striking. Her stout oak frame resisted the fiercest attempts of the billows to tear it asunder. The storm subsided during the night, and the men were

able, in the morning, to make their way to the wreck, and despoil her of whatever took their fancy.

The thousands of valuable books, and the hold-full of costly, but cumbrous furniture, they contemptuously left to the mercy of wind and wave. The great store of gold and silver plate, the casks of finest wines, the barrels and cases of delicious biscuits, conserves, pickles, and other dainties, together with the racks of muskets, swords, and other weapons—these were all very much to their liking. Moreover, the clothing-chests had been ransacked, each man helping himself according to his fancy. The result was a display of gorgeous uniforms and elegant apparel that would have been quite imposing had not the faces and manners of the wearers been so ludicrously out of keeping with their costumes.

Little did Prince Edward imagine, when ordering liberal additions to his wardrobe, that those resplendent garments were destined to be worn to tatters on the backs of the wreckers of Sable Island. What would have been his feelings could he have seen Evil-Eye strutting about as proud as a turkey-cock in the superb uniform intended for the commander of the forces at Halifax?

Although the profuse profanity of the speakers shocked and sickened him, Eric listened attentively to all that was said, in the hope of picking up something about his

future. But the wreckers were too much occupied with their own affairs to pay any attention to him. Presently Black Joe announced that supper was ready, whereupon they all stopped talking, and fell to with ravenous appetites.

The table looked curiously out of keeping with its associations of squalid hut; and coarse, brutal men. It was covered with a cloth of richest damask, that should have adorned a royal dining room, and set out with china, glass, plate, and cutlery of corresponding elegance. It filled Eric with indignation and disgust to see the wreckers hacking their meat with ivory-handled knives, impaling their potatoes upon silver forks, and quenching their thirst by copious draughts out of cut glass goblets, which seemed to be desecrated by their foul touch.

Ben motioned him to a seat beside himself, and helped him bountifully. Ill at ease as the boy felt, he was very hungry, and was glad to do full justice to the coarse but plentiful fare provided by Black Joe. The wine he would not touch.

The hearty supper and the abundant wine put the men in even better humor than before, and Ben now saw his opportunity to carry out a plan that had been forming in his mind. Rising to his feet, he secured his companion's attention by rapping loudly upon the table with the

handle of his knife, and then proceeded to surprise them by making a little speech; for so chary of his words was he, as a usual thing, that they tometimes called him Silent Ben.

“I want a word with you, mates,” said he; and at once every face was turned toward him.

“You see this boy here. Now, I’ve taken a great liking to him, and I’m willing that he and his dog shall be counted as part of my share of this last prize. That’s all right, ain’t it?”

“Aye, aye, Ben; right enough,” came from half-a-dozen of them, while some of the others looked a little doubtful, as if they didn’t know exactly what was coming.

CHAPTER VII.

A SABLE ISLAND WINTER.

“WELL, now, look here, mates,” Ben continued. “Fair and square’s the word between us, ain’t it? If I choose to take a notion to these two, here, it’s my own lookout, and it’s not for any other chap to be interfering with me, any more than I’d be after wanting your things, eh?”

They were beginning to see what he was driving at, now, and one of them said, with a sort of sneer :

“You’re not afraid of any one wanting your boy, or his dog, either, are you?”

“Not exactly,” answered Ben. “But what I’ve on my mind is this : Seeing they’re my property, I don’t want any one to meddle with them, or give them any trouble ; that’s only fair, ain’t it?”

“Fair enough, Ben ; but what are you going to do with the boy when we leave here?” asked one. And there was a murmur of assent to the question.

“That’ll be all right, mates,” replied Ben, promptly. “I’ll be surety that he doesn’t get us into any trouble. You just leave that to me, and I’ll warrant you I’ll get

him away from us quiet enough. What do you say, mates? ”

Although by dint of bluster and brutality Evil-Eye had forced his way to a sort of leadership among the wreckers, there was really none of them with so much influence as Ben. With the exception of Evil-Eye, they were all now quite ready to accept his assurances of Eric not proving a source of trouble, and to consent to his remaining with them. Evil-Eye growled and grumbled a good deal, but could get nobody to heed him; and Ben, satisfied that he had carried his point, and that Eric and Prince were safe, took his seat again, and lit his pipe for a good smoke.

He was perfectly sincere in promising that Eric would not get his associates into any trouble. He certainly never imagined what would be the result of his taking him under his protection. Could he have had a peep into the future, perhaps he would have hesitated before becoming his champion. As it was, he gave himself no concern upon the point.

Eric felt wonderfully relieved at the result of his protector's appeal. It settled his position among his strange, uncongenial companions. They might take no notice of him, if they chose; indeed, that was just what he would prefer. But they had, at all events, not only recognized,

but consented to his presence ; and this took a great load off his mind.

Although his objections had been ignored by his companions, Evil-Eye was by no means disposed to give up altogether his designs upon Eric. There were two reasons why he hungered for the boy's life. It was against his principle of dead men telling no tales, that he should be spared ; and, again, he hated Ben, and the mere fact of his being interested in Eric was quite sufficient to cause the innocent lad to get a share of that hatred.

In the days that followed, Eric could not fail to be conscious of the frequency with which the ruffian's one eye was turned upon him, and of the hyena-like look with which it regarded him. Happy for him was it that there was a restraining influence which kept that awful look from finding its way into fitting deed.

Though they did not distinctly recognize any leader,—their motto being each man for himself, and one as good as another,—the wreckers regarded Ben with a respect accorded no other member of the motley crew. This was in part due to his great size and strength, and in part to his taciturn, self-contained ways, which prevented any of that familiarity that so quickly breeds contempt.

Evil-Eye feared Ben no less than he hated him, and dared not openly attempt anything against him ; al-

though the fire of his fury burned hotly within his breast. In this fear of Ben, much more than in the decision of the other wreckers, lay Eric's safety. Ere long, this defense was strengthened in a manner most strange, startling, and happily most effective.

A week of almost incessant stormy weather had compelled the wreckers to spend most of their time in the hut. Finding the hours hang heavy on their hands, many of them had sought solace in drink, of which the "Francis'" fine stock of wines and liquors furnished an unstinted supply. No one drank more deeply than Evil-Eye. Day after day was passed in a state alternating between coarse hilarity and maudlin stupor. Ben, on the other hand, hardly touched the liquor, contenting himself with sipping a little at his meals.

It was well, indeed, that he should be so moderate, for his cool head and strong hand were in demand more than once to prevent serious conflicts among his intoxicated companions. Eric, in spite of the stormy weather, kept as much out of doors as possible. He preferred the buffeting of the wintry winds to the close atmosphere of the hut, foul with oaths, and reeking with tobacco and spirits.

Evil-Eye's carouse had continued several days. Early one night, after he had fallen into a sottish sleep upon his bunk, and the others had, later on, one by one, turned

in for the night, leaving the room in a silence broken only by the heavy breathing and stertorous snoring of the sleepers, the whole hut was suddenly aroused by an appalling yell from Evil-Eye. Starting up, his companions saw him, by the light of a moonbeam that strayed in through one of the port-holes, rise to his feet with an expression of the most frantic terror upon his hideous countenance, as he shrieked at the top of his voice :

“ I will. I swear I will. If you’ll only let me alone.”

Then, throwing up his arms, he fell over, foaming, in a fit.

For some minutes the hut was a scene of wild confusion, as its bewildered inmates, so suddenly aroused from their sleep, stumbled about in the darkness, trying to find out what was the matter. But Ben, who was not easily frightened, soon restored order by striking a light, and showing that whatever may have been the matter with Evil-Eye, there was certainly no real cause for alarm. Thereupon, with many a curse upon him for disturbing their night’s rest, most of them grumblingly went back to sleep.

A few thought it worth while to see what was the matter with Evil-Eye, and of those Ben took command. Little as he loved the ruffian, he could not find it in his heart to let him die for lack of a little care. So, under

his direction, the struggling man was lifted out upon the floor. His face was splashed with water, while his arms and legs were chafed by rough hands. In a little while the patient's struggles grew less violent, the purple hue left his face, and his breathing became more natural. Presently, with a great sigh, he fell into a heavy sleep, from which he did not awake for many hours.

Although pestered with questions, upon his return to consciousness, as to the cause of his strange behavior, he refused to give any reason. But there were two changes in him too noticeable not to excite the remark of his associates. He was much more moderate in the use of wine, taking care not to drink to excess, and his attitude toward Eric became curiously different. Instead of regarding him with his former look of hungering hatred, he now seemed to have a feeling of dread. He shrank from being near him, avoiding him in every possible way, treating him, in fact, much as a dog would a man who had been especially cruel to him.

Ben and Eric at once noted the change, and were well pleased at it. Some time after, they learned the cause. It seemed that the evening Evil-Eye had acted so strangely, he had been awakened from his drunken sleep about midnight by a startling vision.

It was the form of a tall man in a military uniform.

dripping with sea-water and soiled with sand. On his face was the pallor of death, and his eyes had an awful, far-away expression, as though they were looking through the startled sleeper. Fixing them steadfastly upon Evil-Eye, whose blood seemed to freeze in his veins, he held up his forefinger as if commanding attention, and pointed to the bunk where Eric lay sleeping.

At the same time his face took on a threatening look, and his lips moved. Although no words reached Evil-Eye's ears, he understood. As the spectre stood before him, so intense was his terror that it broke the spell which locked his lips; and he shrieked out the words already mentioned. He knew no more until, at broad daylight, he found himself weak and miserable in his berth.

Like many men of his kind, Evil-Eye was very superstitious. After the vision he looked upon Eric as being under the protection of some ghostly being that would forever haunt any one who did him any harm.

Henceforth Eric had nothing to fear from him.

Winter on Sable Island is not like winter on the mainland. The Gulf Stream prevents any long continuance of cold. The snow comes in violent storms, and fills the valleys with drifts; but these soon vanish. There is more rain and fog than snow, even in mid-winter, and

the herds of wild, shaggy, sharp-boned ponies which scamper from end to end of the island have no difficulty in finding plenty to eat among the grasses which grow rankly in every sheltered spot.

These ponies were a great source of amusement to Eric. But for them and the rabbits, which were even more numerous, the winter, wearisome at best, would have been simply intolerable.

The wreckers had captured a score of the ponies, and broken them in after a fashion. They were kept near the hut, in a large corral built of driftwood, and there were plenty of saddles and bridles.

Now if there was one manly accomplishment more than another upon which Eric prided himself it was his horsemanship. He had been put upon a pony when only five years old, and had been an enthusiastic rider ever since. At Oakdene he had ridden to hounds since he was twice five years of age, and there was not a lad in the county with a firmer seat in the saddle, or a more masterful touch of the reins. The saddles and bridles at Sable Island were poor things compared with what he had been accustomed to ; and the ponies themselves were about as wicked and vicious as animals of that size could be. But this only lent an additional zest to the amusement of riding them. Their bad behavior did not daunt



The Wreckers of Sable Island.

Eric in the least. With Ben's assistance, a pony would be caught in the corral, and saddled, and then off he would go for a long, lively gallop, Prince, as full of glee as himself, barking and bounding along at his side.

Very often Ben would keep him company; for there was an old black stallion of unusual size which seemed equal to the task of bearing his huge frame. Then Eric's happiness was complete; for every day he was growing more fond of the big man who had saved him from a dreadful death, and who now treated him with paternal tenderness.

With the keen wintry air making his cheeks tingle, he would scamper off at full speed for mile after mile, while Ben lumbered along more slowly, thoroughly enjoying the boy's vigor and daring. Then, halting until Ben overtook him, he would canter on quietly.

An amusement of which Eric never tired was chasing the wild ponies, as though he wanted to catch one of them. Climbing one of the sand-hills, he would look about until he sighted a herd grazing quietly in the hollows, and guarded as usual by a touzle-maned stallion of mature years. Making a wide detour, and carefully concealing his approach by keeping the hillocks between himself and the ponies, he would get as near as he possibly could without being seen. If necessary, he dis-

mounted and crept along on his hands and knees, dragging his own pony by the bridle, while Prince followed.

When concealment was no longer possible, he would spring into his saddle, and with wild shouts charge down upon the startled ponies; and they would gallop off in headlong stampede.

One afternoon, while thus amusing himself, he had quite an exciting experience, and rather a narrow escape from injury. He had stampeded a herd of ponies, and, picking out a sturdy little youngster as his particular prey, was pressing him pretty closely, when the pony charged straight up the side of a hill. As it was not steep, Eric followed hard after him, taking for granted the slope would be about the same on the other side. Instead of that, the hill fell away abruptly. Overplunged the hunted pony. Unable to check his own animal, full of the spirit of the chase, overplunged Eric after. For a moment both ponies kept their feet; but, the treacherous sand giving way beneath them, they rolled head over heels. Eric happily got free from his horse in time to save himself from being crushed underneath it; but when they all reached the bottom in a heap together, he could not escape the frantically pawing hoofs; and one of them struck him such a blow upon the head as to stun him.

When he recovered he found himself lying upon the sand, not a pony in sight, and Prince licking his face with affectionate anxiety. His head ached sharply, and he felt somewhat sore after his tremendous tumble; but not a bone was broken, nor joint sprained. Thankful at having gotten off so well, he made the best of his way back to the hut.

Ben was greatly pleased at the adventure, and regretted he had not been there when ponies, boy, and dog, rolled down the hill together.

“You ought to let your friends know when you’re going to give a performance like that, my lad,” said he, after a hearty laugh. “It’s too good to keep to yourself.”

“Perhaps you’d like me to repeat it for you,” Eric suggested.

“No, indeed, Eric. You got off all right that time, but you might break your precious neck the next. How would you like to have a try at a morse? The men tell me they saw a lot of them at the west end this morning; and as you’re so fond of hunting, there’s something well worth killing.”

CHAPTER VIII.

ANXIOUS TIMES.

“**H**OW would I like it?” cried Eric, his face beaming.

“Why, above all things, I’ve often seen pictures of the great ugly creatures, and I think it would be just splendid to shoot one and get his tusks.”

“All right, my boy,” replied Ben. “We’ll start the first thing in the morning.”

Accordingly, the next morning the two set out upon their ponies for the west end. Ben carried a heavy musket that would send a load of slugs through a ship’s side, and Eric a light smooth-bore, the accuracy of which he had proven by frequent practice. As they would be away all day, they took plenty of biscuits along. Prince, of course, went with them, and as soon as they had disposed of breakfast they started.

There were many creatures to be found on Sable Island in those days, which would be vainly sought now. Besides the ponies, a large number of wild cattle and hogs roamed about the interior, and furnished the wreckers with abundant meat ; while during the winter, the morse, or walrus,

and the great Greenland seal paid the beaches regular visits. The common harbor seal was there all the year round. Of these animals, only the ponies and common seals still remain; the others have been all killed off.

When Ben and Eric drew near the end of the island, they dismounted, and tethered the ponies, so that they could not run back to the corral. They then made their way cautiously to the edge of the bank thrown up by the waves. Ben was a little ahead of Eric, and the moment he peeped over the bank he turned and motioned Eric to follow.

"Look, lad!" said he, in a voice full of excitement, as he pointed to the beach in front. "There they are! Aren't they beauties?"

Eric looked, and his face showed the surprise he had too much sense to put into words. "Beauties!" he thought to himself. "Why, they are the most hideous monsters I ever saw in my life."

And they certainly were hideous, with their huge, dun-colored, ungainly bodies, their bullet heads, their grisly beards, their terrible tusks, and their bulging eyes. They looked as ugly as some nightmare vision. Plucky as he was, Eric could not restrain a tremor as he gazed at them. But he had no time to indulge his feelings, for Ben said, in a hoarse whisper:

“You take that tusker right in front of you, and I’ll take the big fellow to the right, and when I say ‘Fire!’ let drive. Be sure and aim right at the nose.”

Eric’s heart was beating wildly, and he could scarcely breathe for excitement; but his hand was steady as he drew the musket to his shoulder, and took careful aim at the nose of the walrus Ben had assigned to him. Giving a quick glance to see that all was ready, Ben called “Fire!”

Like the report of one the two muskets cracked together, and the marksmen peered eagerly through the smoke to see the result. Clearly enough their aim had been good: for while the remainder of the little pack of walrus lumbered off into the water snorting with terror, the two that had been picked out as targets did not follow. Ben’s fell over on the sand, to all appearances dead; but Eric’s plunged madly about, seeming to be too bewildered to take refuge in flight.

Hastily reloading, the hunters rushed upon their prey, and Ben, seizing a good opportunity, put another charge of slugs into the struggling creature’s head, just behind the ear, which cut short its sufferings.

“Hurrah!” cried Ben, radiant with pride and satisfaction. “We’ve got them both, and no mistake. We’ll each have a fine pair of tusks, won’t we?”

Eric was no less delighted, and all his nervousness having vanished, executed a sort of war-dance around the prostrate forms of the sea-monsters, which looked all the uglier the closer he got to them. Drawing a big knife from his belt, Ben approached his walrus to sever the head from the body, Eric standing a little distance off to watch him. They were quite sure the creature was dead, but the instant the sharp steel touched its neck it came to life ; for it had been only stunned. With a sudden sweep of its fore-flipper, it hurled Ben over upon his back, sending the knife flying from his hand.

“Eric ! quick ! for God’s sake !” cried Ben, as he fell.

The infuriated monster was right over him. In another moment those terrible tusks would have been buried in his body when, with a roar like that of a lion, Prince launched himself full at the walrus’ head, and his great fangs closed tightly in the soft part where the head joins the neck. Uttering a roar quite equal to the dog’s, the morse turned upon his new assailant ; but just as he did so, Eric’s rifle spoke again. Its bullet crashed into the monster’s brain, and with a mad flurry, which loosened even Prince’s hold, it rolled over upon the sand, this time dead beyond question.

Ben sprang to his feet, and rushing upon Eric, flung his arms around him, and gave him a hug that fairly

squeezed the breath out of him. Then, without a word, he turned to Prince, and repeated the operation. He then expressed his gratitude in these words:

“It was a good day for me when I saved your lives. You’ve done me good ever since, and now you’ve saved *my* life, and it’s only tit for tat. All right, my lad; so long as there’s a drop of blood in my body, no harm shall come to either of you, that Ben Harden can fend off.”

The business of beheading, which had been so startlingly interrupted, was now resumed. From the way Ben handled his knife, he was evidently quite experienced at the work. They wanted only the tusks; but to get them out in perfect condition, it would be necessary to boil the heads until the flesh came off readily; so they had to take them back to the hut for that purpose.

Well satisfied with the result of their hunt, they ate their lunch, and took a good rest before returning to the hut, which they reached early in the afternoon. They both felt that they were now bound to each other by ties of peculiar strength. Eric, uncertain and full of difficulty as to the future, somehow felt convinced that Ben would bring it out all right for him. He little imagined how much he would help himself in escaping.

Chasing ponies and hunting walrus were not the only amusements Sable Island afforded Eric. As has been

already mentioned, the grassy dells abounded with rabbits, and the marshy lake and ponds with wild fowl. The rabbit-shooting was really capital sport. The bunnies were fine big fellows, as lively and wary as any sportsman could wish, and to secure a good bag of them meant plenty of hard work.

It was the rabbit-hunting that found Prince in his glory. Had he been a greyhound instead of a mastiff, he could not have entered more heartily into the chase. To be sure, he proved, upon the whole, rather more of a hindrance than a help; but no suspicion of this fact ever dashed his bright spirit; and not for the world would Eric have hinted it to him. His redeeming quality lay in his retrieving, for he had been carefully trained to fetch and carry; and he quickly learned to hunt out and bring to them the victims of their muskets. The rabbits were not killed in the mere wantonness of sport. There was always an active demand for them at the hut, where Black Joe made them into savory stews.

About the same time as the walrus came great numbers of the Greenland seal, which a little later brought forth their funny little whelps. These looked like amphibious puppies as they sprawled about the beach, or scuttled off into the water. They took Eric's boyish fancy so strongly that he longed to have one for a pet.

Ben soon gratified him by creeping cautiously upon the pack one day, and grasping by the tail a fine, sleek, shiny little fellow. After a couple of weeks' confinement in a pen, that Eric built for him, with constant, kind attention, the captive became so contented with his new life, and so attached to his young master, that he was allowed his liberty. He showed not the slightest disposition to run away. Eric found him quite as intelligent and docile as a dog, and taught him many amusing tricks.

So long as the weather was fine Eric had plenty of cures for low spirits. But in the winter the proportion of fine days to foul is very small on Sable Island. For a whole week, at a time, the sun would not appear, and long storms were frequent. Happily, there was one resource at hand for the stormy weather.

Among the spoils of the "Francis" was a leather-covered box, so handsome and so heavy that one of the wreckers, feeling sure it contained something valuable, brought it carefully ashore. When he broke it open he was much disgusted to find that it contained nothing but books. He flung it into a corner, swearing that "he had no book larnin', and what's more, didn't want none."

Eric afterward picked it up, and was delighted to find in it a large assortment of interesting books. He stowed the box carefully away at the back of his bunk, and

thenceforth, when compelled to stay indoors, was never without a book in his hands. He read over and over those well-selected volumes, enriching his mind with their finest passages.

Yet, despite all those exertions, Eric was far from being really happy or content. His one thought was deliverance from his strange situation, and he could not disguise from himself how dark his future looked. Ben, of course, could now be relied upon to the uttermost. But while his protection availed so long as they remained upon the island, matters would, no doubt, be different when the time came to leave the place. Then not only Evil-Eye, but all the other wreckers, would undoubtedly see to it that there was no fear of his becoming an informer, and placing them in peril of the law.

As the winter wore away, they often talked about going to Boston; and Eric gathered from their conversation that with the coming of spring they looked for a schooner sent out by confederates to take them and their booty home. This schooner now became the supreme object of his concern. In it he saw his best, if not, indeed, his only hope of deliverance. Many an evening when he seemed deep in his books, he was, in reality, with strained ears and throbbing pulses, listening to the wreckers discussing their plans for the future. Tax his

brains as he might, he could invent no satisfactory scheme.

More than once he tried to talk with Ben about the matter. But whether Ben did not wish to confess that he had no plan himself, or whether he thought it best not to excite uncertain hope, he always refused to talk about it, generally saying:

“We’ll see, my lad ; we’ll see. I’ll do my best for ye, never you fear.”

As spring drew near, signs of excitement and eager expectation became visible in the wreckers. They spent most of the clear days upon the highest hills, peering out across the waves in search of the schooner. They did not know just when to expect her. Indeed, had a date been fixed, they would not have been any better off, for they were without any means of keeping an account of the days, except by observing the sun and moon.

The days grew steadily longer and warmer, and yet no schooner appeared. Hope long deferred did not make the hot temper of the wreckers any more amiable, and Eric, worried as he was with his own troubles, found life harder than ever. Moreover, a new danger presently appeared.

The majority of the wreckers showed entire indifference toward him. He and his big dog were Ben’s belongings,

and so long as they got in nobody's way they were let alone. But when day after day, and week after week slipped by, and the schooner did not arrive, the boy began to notice a change. Ugly, suspicious, threatening glances were cast upon him, and interchanged. Beyond a doubt, the peril of his position was alarmingly on the increase.

The explanation was simple enough. Like all men of their class, the wreckers were intensely superstitious, and the wily villian, Evil-Eye, though indirectly, shrewdly seized upon the delay of the schooner to strike at Eric. He suggested to the men that the boy's presence was the cause of the vessel's non-appearance. He had brought them ill-luck; for not a wreck had come their way since his life had been spared. Now he was playing them another scurvy trick, and by some witchery, interfering with the carrying out of their plans.

The seed so craftily sown took root at once. Only the curious feeling, half-fear, half-admiration, that they held toward Ben, saved Eric for a time from falling a victim to their superstition.

Even his influence would not have availed much longer, had not, one fine morning in May, the welcome cry of "Sail ho! sail ho!" rung out lustily from a watcher on the highest hill. Soon the broad sails of a schooner appeared.

Everything else was forgotten in the joy occasioned by this sight. But Evil-Eye, again foiled in his base designs, snarled savagely at Eric, and swore that he would have his own way yet.

The water being too shallow, the schooner hove to about a mile from shore, and fired a gun to announce her arrival. But that was not necessary. All the inhabitants of the island were already on the beach to welcome her. Presently a boat was lowered, and three persons getting in, it was rowed swiftly ashore. The breakers were successfully passed with the aid of a number of the wreckers, who dashed into the surf, and drew the boat up high and dry upon the beach.

The new-comers were very heartily, if somewhat roughly greeted. After the first excitement was over, Eric noticed they were looking at him curiously. Evil-Eye whispered among them, whereupon they shook their heads as though to say:

“Oh no, that can’t be done. We’re quite sure that won’t do at all.”

Eric’s heart sank when he saw this, and rightly guessed its meaning. There seemed, at best, but two chances for him. He would be either left behind upon the island in helpless solitude, or be taken to Boston, and there gotten rid of somehow—in such a way that he could give no

trouble to the wreckers. On the latter, surrounded though it was with uncertainties and dangers innumerable, he pinned all his hopes. It offered some faint chance of ultimate deliverance. But would they take him on board the schooner?

CHAPTER IX.

FAREWELL TO SABLE ISLAND.

GREAT was the bustle and excitement at the wreckers' quarters. The day happened to be particularly favorable for embarking—such a day, in fact, as might not come once in a month; and everything must be done to make the most of it. But the very beauty of the day gave evidence of approaching change. It was what the sea-faring folk call a “weather-breeder,” because such lovely days are always followed by storm.

None knew this better than the wreckers. They made all haste to transfer themselves and their booty to the schooner. In keen anxiety Eric watched the work going on. No one seemed to notice him, though several times he caught Evil-Eye regarding him with such a look of fiendish triumph as sent a shiver to his heart.

Ben, who had his own interests to care for, cheered him a little by clapping him on the back as he passed, and saying, in his most encouraging tone:

“Keep up your heart, my lad. We'll manage it somehow.”

But the removal of the booty was almost complete, and

still he did not know his fate. Only another boat-load of stuff remained to be taken off; and in the boat that came for this were Ben, Evil-Eye, and the captain of the schooner. Eric stood near the landing-place with Prince beside him. He knew that his future hung upon what might be decided within a few minutes.

The boat was loaded, and the crew stood ready to launch her into the breakers. Now came the critical moment. How far the matter might have been discussed already Eric had no idea. He saw Ben draw the captain aside and engage him in earnest conversation, while Evil-Eye hung about as though he burned to put in a word.

His heart almost stopped beating as he watched the captain's face. Evidently he was not unmoved by Ben's arguments. His countenance showed he was wavering, and his opposition weakening.

With rising hope, Eric noted this. Evil-Eye saw it too, but with different feelings. He thought it time to interfere, and, drawing nearer began, in a loud, half-threatening tone:

“Say, now, captain——”

But before he could get out another word Ben wheeled round, his face aflame with anger. Rising to his utmost height, he drew a pistol from his belt, and pointing it straight at Evil-Eye's breast, roared out:

"Curse you, *I* say. Hold that foul tongue of yours, or I'll put a bullet through your heart before you can wink."

With a start of terror the ruffian shrank away from the giant who towered above him ; and satisfied that he would not venture to interpose again, Ben resumed his talk with the captain. For a little longer the dialogue continued. What the arguments were that Ben used, or what inducements he offered, Eric did not learn until afterward. But, oh ! what a bound his heart gave when Ben left the captain and came toward him, his face so full of relief as to seem almost radiant !

"It's all right, my lad," said he, grasping him by the shoulder and pushing him toward the boat. "You're to come. Let's hurry up, now, and get on board."

Too overjoyed to speak, Eric hastened to obey, giving Ben a look of unspeakable gratitude as he clasped his hand with passionate fervor. Evil-Eye scowled terribly when the boy sprang into the boat, and dared only mutter his protests, for clearly enough, Ben was in no mood for trifling, and the captain was evidently quite on his side.

Without waiting for an invitation, Prince promptly leaped in beside his young master, at which the men in the boat laughed, and the captain said, good-humoredly :

“Let him come too. He’s too good to leave behind.”

In a few minutes more, Eric, with a feeling of glad relief beyond all power of words to express, stood upon the schooner’s deck and looked back at the island which for well-nigh half a year had been his prison—almost his grave.

The low, broad, weather-beaten hut was easily visible. “How good God was to protect me there!” he thought, as he recalled the many scenes of violence he had witnessed. “I wonder what is to become of me. Poor father must have given me up for dead long ago. Shall I ever get to him?”

With many a “Yo! heave ho!” the sailors set about raising the anchor; the schooner’s broad wings were hoisted to catch the breeze already blowing; and soon she was speeding away southward toward Boston.

They had just got well under weigh when, happening to glance around, Eric, who was standing on the bow, enjoying the swift rush of the schooner through the foaming water, noticed a number of the wreckers and the crew gathered about the captain on the poop. They were examining something very carefully through his telescope. Following the direction of the glass, Eric could make out a dark object rising out of the water, several miles away on the port side. This was evidently the cause of the

men's concern. Almost unconsciously he drew near the group, in order to hear what they were saying. The captain just then handed the telescope to Evil-Eye.

With an oath, he said, his face darkening with rage, "It's one of those cursed brigs, and no mistake, and she's running right across our course. If we keep on this way we'll fall right into her clutches. Look you, Evil-Eye, and see if I'm not right."

Evil-Eye took the glass and looked long and carefully. It was clear enough that he came to the same conclusion as the captain, for one of his most hideous scowls overspread his countenance as he growled out, with a string of oaths :

"It's the brig, and no mistake, and we're running straight into her jaws. We'll have to go about and sail off shore, captain."

At once the captain roared out his orders, and the sailors sprang to obey. There was a rattling of blocks, a creaking of booms, a fierce flapping of canvas. After a moment's hesitation in the eye of the wind, the schooner gracefully fell off, and was soon gliding away on the other tack, with the brig now almost directly astern.

Whatever doubt there may have been on board the brig as to the propriety of pursuing the schooner, was dissipated by his sudden change of course ; and, still dis-

tant though she was, a keen eye could make out that they were hoisting additional sails, and making every effort to overtake the schooner.

There were yet three hours of daylight, and the brig was evidently a fast sailer. The schooner's chance of escape lay in keeping her well astern until night came on, and then, by a sudden change of course, slipping away from her in the darkness.

Every inch of canvas the schooner boasted was clapped on her, and, almost buried in foam, she rushed madly through the water.

Eric's first feeling, on seeing the brig, and the fear created among his captors, was of intense joy, and he watched its steady growth upon the horizon with eager anxiety. He did not notice the ominous looks cast upon him by Evil-Eye and others, until Ben, whose eyes seemed to miss nothing, drew him away to his former post near the bows, saying, in a deep undertone:

"Come with me, lad. I want a word with you."

Ben's countenance showed that he was much troubled, and Eric, full of hope though he was at the near prospect of his own deliverance, could not help feeling as though it were very selfish of him; for it certainly meant that Ben would be placed in danger. He determined in his own mind that if the brig should capture the schooner,

he would plead so hard for his kind rescuer that no harm would be done him.

“Will the brig catch up to us, Ben?” he asked, eagerly.
“Do you think it will?”

“It’ll be a bad business for you, my lad, if it does,” answered Ben, in an unusually gruff tone.

“Why, Ben, what do you mean?” asked Eric, in surprise.

“Mean what I say,” retorted Ben. Then, after a moment’s silence, he went on. “Captain says that brig’s been sent from Halifax after us, and nobody else; and if she should catch us, you may be sure the wreckers ain’t going to leave you round to tell the people on the brig all you know about them. Before the brig’s alongside they’ll drop you over the bulwark with a weight that’ll prevent your ever showing up on top again.”

At these words, whose truth Eric realized at once, his heart seemed turned to stone. And now, just as passionately as he had prayed that the brig might overtake them, did he pray that the schooner might keep out of its reach.

In the meantime, the two vessels were tearing through the water without much change in their relative positions.

Darkness was drawing near. As the sun went down, the change that the beauty of the morning foreboded,

took place. The sky grew cloudy, the wind blew harder, and there was every sign of an approaching storm.

As luck would have it, this state of affairs suited the schooner far better than the brig. With great exultation the wreckers noted that their pursuer was shortening sail. The square-rigged bark could not stand a storm as well as could the schooner.

“Hurrah!” the captain shouted, gleefully. “They’re taking in some of their canvas. They can’t stand this blow with so much top-hamper. We’ll show them a clean pair of heels yet.”

And so it turned out. With bow buried in foam, and decks awash, the schooner staggered swiftly onward under full press of sail, although every moment the canvas threatened to tear itself out of the bolts. Before the darkness enveloped her the brig had disappeared behind, completely distanced. Everybody on board breathed more freely. Setting a course that, by a wide detour, would bring him in due time to Boston, the captain took satisfaction by cursing the brig for causing him the loss of a whole day at least.

That night Ben, for the first time, told Eric what had been arranged concerning him. On their arrival in Boston he was to be kept hidden in the hold until the time came for the sailing of a ship for England, about which

the captain knew. He would be placed on board this ship as cabin boy. When she reached her destination he might make his way to his friends the best he could. By that time the wreckers (none of whom intended to return to Sable Island) would have disposed of their booty, and scattered beyond all possibility of being caught.

Ben did not add, as he might have done, that in order to effect this arrangement he had to bribe the captain, by turning over to him one-half of his own interest in the schooner's cargo.

After living in peril of death for so many months, this plan filled Eric's heart with joy. It might mean many more hardships, but it also meant return to those who were now mourning him as dead. He thanked Ben over and over again, assuring him he would never forget his wonderful kindness; and as Ben listened in silence there was a glistening in the corner of his eye that showed he was not unmoved. The storm blew itself out during the night, and was followed by a steady breeze, which bore the schooner along so fast that ere the sun went down on the following afternoon she was gliding up Boston Bay, looking as innocent as any ordinary fishing schooner. The anchor dove with a big splash into the still water, the chain rattled noisily through the hawse-hole, and the voyage was ended.

Without delay a boat was lowered. The captain and Evil-Eye got into it, inviting Ben to accompany them, but he declined. He intended to watch over Eric until he should be taken to the English ship. The boat rowed off, and before it returned Eric was sound asleep.

He was awakened by the singing of the men as they toiled at the windlass, and the sullen rattle of the chain as it rose reluctantly link by link from the water. Then he heard the waves rippling against the bow, and he knew that the schooner was moving.

As he rightly guessed, she was making her way to her berth at the wharf. During all that day there was continual motion on the deck, and the boy imprisoned in the hold tried to while away the long hours by guessing what it meant, and what the sailors were about. Ben brought him a bountiful breakfast, dinner, and tea. He stayed only while Eric ate, and did not seem much disposed to talk. He could not say exactly when the English ship would sail, but thought it would be soon.

The schooner became much quieter by nightfall, for the majority of her crew had gone ashore. Soon there was perfect stillness,—the vessel at times seemed to be completely deserted. There was a tower clock not far away which rang out the hours loudly, and Eric heard seven, eight and nine struck ere he fell asleep.

How long he had slept he knew not, when he was aroused by two men talking in loud tones on the deck just above him. They were evidently the worse for liquor, and had fallen into a dispute about something, Presently one of them exclaimed :

“It is there. I know it’s there. I’ll prove it to you.”

CHAPTER X.

RELEASE AND RETRIBUTION.

THEN came the sound of the fore-hatch being unfastened and lifted aside, and the light of a lantern flashed into the hold. Whatever the man sought, he soon found it ; for he said, triumphantly :

“ There, now ! Do you see it ? Didn’t I say right ? ”

He drew the hatch back again, and with his companion went stumbling off to the cabin. As the hatch was opened, Eric shrank back into a corner ; for he knew not what the man might be about. But when all was silent again, he crept to the spot underneath the hatchway, and looked up.

The instant he did so, he saw something that caused his heart to give a wild bound. It was one little star shining brightly into his eye. The sailor had carelessly left the hatch unfastened and drawn a little aside.

The way of escape was there !

With bated breath and beating heart, Eric raised himself softly and pushed at the hatch. At first it would not budge ; but on his putting forth more strength it slid away a few inches, making no perceptible noise.

Little by little he pushed at it until there was space enough for him to pass through. Then, with extreme caution, he lifted himself until he could survey the deck, and peered eagerly into the darkness to see if any of the men were about. There was no moon; but the stars shone their brightest, and as the boy's eyes were accustomed to the darkness, he could see fairly well.

It was easy for him to swing himself up on the deck. Then, crouched in the deep shadow of the foremast, he looked anxiously about him. Not a soul was in sight. Not a sound disturbed the still air. The black line of the wharf rose but a few feet above the bulwarks. Gliding noiselessly across, he finally got upon the rail, and thence, with an active spring, upon the wharf. He was free!

It was as deserted and silent as the schooner's deck. Along one side was piled a line of casks and barrels, behind which he crept with the quietness of a cat until the tall warehouses were reached; then, straightening himself up, he moved more rapidly until he came out upon the street, which opened to right and left, leading away into the darkness—whither, he knew not.

Taking the right turning, he hastened on, resolved to appeal for protection to the first respectable-looking person he might meet. By the dim light of infrequent

oil-lamps at the corners, he could make out that he was in a street of shops, taverns, and warehouses.

Some of the taverns were still open, but all the other buildings were closed. Very few persons were about; and as these all appeared to be seafaring folk, he carefully avoided them, keeping in the shadow of porches and alley-ways until they passed. He was in a state of high excitement—his anxiety to find some safe refuge contending with joy at his escape from the wrecker's clutches.

He must have gone about a quarter of a mile, when, just as he approached a tavern that was still in full blast, the door suddenly opened, and a broad band of light fell upon the sidewalk, in the midst of which appeared Evil-Eye, roaring out a drunken song as he beckoned to others inside to follow him.

For an instant Eric stood rooted to the spot with terror. His limbs seemed powerless. Then, as quick as a squirrel, he darted into a dark alley at his right, and, trembling like an aspen leaf, waited for Evil-Eye to pass. The drunken scoundrel lingered for what seemed an hour of agony to the terror-stricken boy; but at length, being joined by his companions, staggered off toward the schooner. The boy, coming out from his retreat so soon as the coast was clear, made all haste in the other direction.

Following up the street, which turned and twisted in the puzzling fashion peculiar to Boston, he was glad to find it leading him to the upper part of the city ; and, after fifteen minutes' smart walking, he came out into a broad avenue, lined on both sides with handsome houses. Here he would surely meet with some one to whom he could safely tell his story.

Weary from excitement and exertion, he sat down upon a broad doorstep which was in the shadow itself, but commanded a stretch of sidewalk illuminated by a street lamp. He thought he would rest there awhile, and in the mean time some one would surely come along. Just as he sat down, the bell of a church-tower clock near by slowly tolled out the midnight hour.

"Oh, gracious! How late it is!" he sighed. "I do hope I shall not have to stay here all the night!"

A few minutes later he heard the sound of approaching steps. They were slow and deliberate ; not those of an unsteady reveler. They came nearer and nearer, and then there emerged into the line of light the figure of a man, tall and stately, wrapped in a black dress, over whose cloak collar fell long locks of snow-white hair.

Not a moment did Eric hesitate. Springing from his hiding-place with a suddenness that caused the passer-by to start in some alarm, he caught hold of the ample cloak,

and, lifting up his face to the wearer, said, beseechingly :
“ Oh, sir! won't you help me ? ”

Quite reassured on seeing how youthful was this sudden disturber of his homeward walk, the gentleman looked down at the eager, pleading face, and, attracted at once by its honesty, put his hand kindly upon the boy's shoulder, saying :

“ Pray, what is the matter, my son? I will gladly help you, as may be within my power.”

The grave, gentle words, with their assurance of protection, wrought a quick revulsion in poor Eric's feelings, strained as they had been for so long to their highest pitch. Instead of replying at once he burst into tears; and his new-found friend, seeing that he had no ordinary case to deal with, took him by the arm, and soothingly said:

“ Come with me. My house is near by. You shall tell me your story there.”

Directing his steps to a large house, in which lights were still burning, he led Eric into a room whose walls were lined with rows of portly volumes.

“ Now, my son,” said he, “ be seated; and when you feel more composed, tell me your troubles. I am quite at your service.”

With a delicious sense of security, such as he had not

felt for many months, Eric sank into a big arm chair, and proceeded to tell his strange story to the grave old gentleman before him. With intense interest and sympathy did Dr. Saltonstall listen to the remarkable narrative as it was simply related, putting in a question now and then when he wanted fuller details. As soon as the boy had finished, the doctor arose, and again put on his hat and cloak.

"Master Copeland," said he, "this is a communication of the utmost importance, and it must be laid before the governor this very night, that immediate action thereon may be taken. I had but lately left his honor when, in God's good providence, I met you. We will go at once to his mansion. Haply he has not yet retired for the night."

Forthwith the two set out, and, walking rapidly, were soon at the governor's mansion. Fortunately he was still awake, and at once gave audience to his late visitors. Before him Eric rehearsed his story. The Honorable Mr. Strong listened with no less interest than had Dr. Saltonstall, nor was he less prompt in taking action. His secretary was summoned, and orders given for a strong posse of constables to be dispatched without loss of time in search of the schooner.

Eric so fully described her that the finding of her would be an easy matter.

But while this was being arranged, a thought flashed into Eric's mind which filled him with great concern. Ben was, no doubt, upon the schooner now, and would be captured with the others. Would he not, then, share their fate, whatever that might be? And if so, would not Eric seem to be wickedly ungrateful if he made no effort to save him? Then there was also his faithful friend Prince, to whom both Ben and himself were so much indebted.

To think was to act. Going manfully up to the austere-looking governor, he put in a passionate plea for the big man and the dog who had been such faithful protectors, and but for whom, indeed, he would not then be living. His honor was evidently touched by his loyal advocacy.

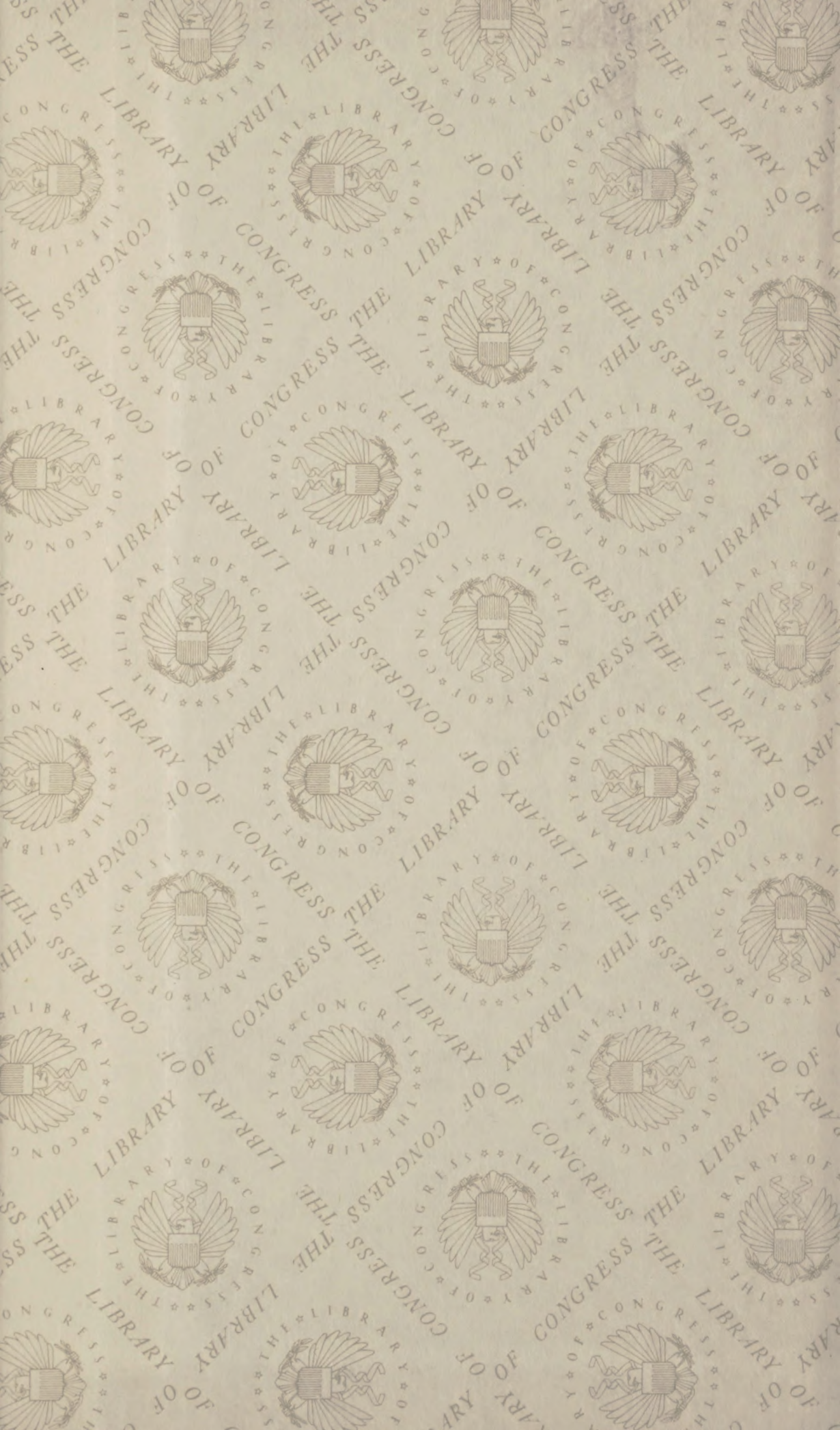
"Do not distress your mind, my lad," said he, kindly. "I have no doubt we can find a way of escape for your friend. He certainly deserves consideration at our hands; and your noble Prince shall be carefully sought for."

The remainder of the story is soon told, The schooner was readily found. The wreckers, surprised in their bunks, proved an easy capture, and before daybreak all were safely locked up in jail. Prince was also found and restored to the delighted Eric, who now felt as though

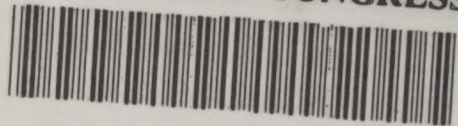
his cup of rejoicing was full. The trial of the wreckers excited widespread interest, and made Eric the hero of the hour. Ben, taking the advice of Dr. Saltonstall, turned State's evidence, and was released. But the other wreckers—from Evil-Eye to Black Bill—received the punishment they had so well merited.

In the mean time Dr. Copeland had been sent for, and, hastening to Boston, he had the supreme delight of clasping to his breast the boy whom he had all through the long winter been mourning as lost to him forever. The meeting between father and son was touching. It seemed as though the doctor could never sufficiently assure himself that it was really his Eric who stood before him, browner of face and bigger of form, but otherwise unchanged by his thrilling experiences among the Wreckers of Sable Island.





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